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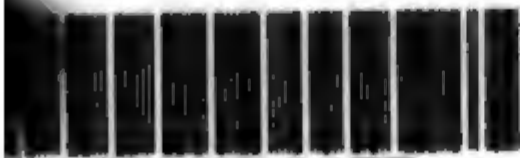
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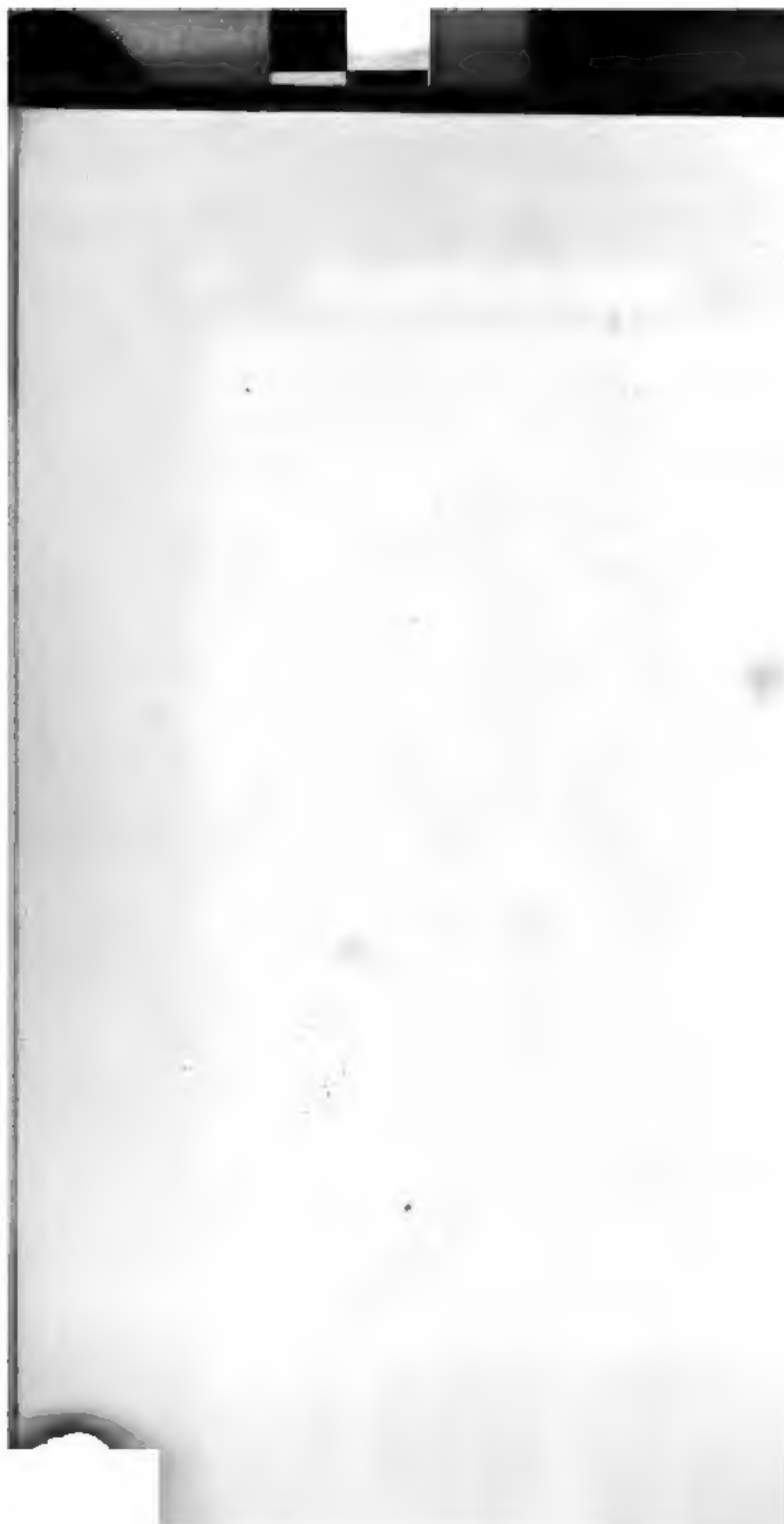
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THE
BELLE OF THE VILLAGE.

BY
JOHN MILLS,
AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN," "OUR
COUNTY," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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THE BELLE OF THE VILLAGE.

CHAPTER I.

LONG ago—it matters not when—the inhabitants of a village in one of the rural districts of England were not a little surprised by a stranger in the sable garb of a widow, accompanied by a little girl, making inquiries for furnished lodgings. It was a most astonishing proceeding; at least so everybody thought, and so everybody said. Who could they be? Where did they come

from ? Why were they there ? By what brought ? How did they arrive ? In chaise, cart, carriage, coach, van, waggon, or wheelbarrow ? No one seemed to know. Numerous were the questions, but painfully few the answers to them. At length the general shopkeeper, whose curiosity on all subjects wherein mystery was involved, mounted like quicksilver in the sun, could no longer submit to the pressure from within, and, in order to obtain the relief he desired, determined upon taking the matter in hand himself, as he would a parcel duly consigned from the wholesale house with which he dealt, and stripping it of all outward concealment, lay bare, exposed and palpable, that which was now wrapped in fog, clouds, and darkness.

Jacob Giles was as mild a little man as ever craned a long thin neck over a little white wisp of a cravat. His hair, always a

poor crop in his sunniest days, looked like thistle down gummed in patches upon a pink scalp; while, as if his system was denied the usual qualities of nutrition, he was completely devoid of eyebrows, eyelashes, and whiskers. Nothing, indeed, could present a smoother surface than Jacob's countenance; more particularly when, with a bland smile, he rested his knuckles on the counter of the general shop, and leaning slightly forward, said, "What may be the next article, Mem?" Just above the tape, however, which held the sweeping white apron round his girdle, as soft, tender, and easily-melted a little heart throbbed, as ever beat within the confines of a human bosom. It was as easily moulded to the slightest touch of want or suffering, as a pat of fresh butter to the dairymaid's stamp.

Jacob Giles, diminutive as he was, possessed an enlarged view of "doing unto

others as he wished they should do unto him;" and although, by care and thrift, never knowing what the necessities of life were, he had not become deaf or indifferent to those of his less fortunate neighbours who might be frequently sensible of nature's immediate demands, without the resources of an equally ready supply. Notwithstanding these sentiments, which rung like sound bell-metal from the secret recesses of Jacob's anatomy, it must be confessed that he was tainted to the backbone with the vulgar inclination of knowing everybody's business, even in preference to his own; and was never at rest, either mentally or physically, until all news, hints, rumours, reports, suspicions, and mysteries, coming under his lynx-eyed notice, were thoroughly sifted, winnowed, and rendered clear and transparent to his perception.

A stranger asking for furnished lodgings

in the village of Grundy's Green! Such a circumstance had not been heard of within the memory of the oldest inhabitant; and as for apartments, they were not to be had, except the sandy-floored parlour with the room over it, at the Harrow and Pitchfork; and the former of these was invariably occupied each Saturday night by the members of the Rollicking Club.

"You'll excuse me, Mem," observed Jacob, between a squeak and a whistle, for he was sadly at a loss for breath, from the haste he had exercised in overtaking the mysterious strangers, now at the extremity of Grundy's Green; "You'll excuse me, Mem," repeated he, glancing from the tall figure of the lady to that of the child, holding timidly the hand of her companion, as she nestled to her side with fear, "but," and the general shopkeeper gently chafed the tips of his long freckled fingers together, "if I'm informed

co-rectly, you are desirous of obtaining furnished lodgings in our village."

"Indeed," replied the stranger, throwing back a deep fall of crape, which hitherto had effectually acted as a perfect screen to her features, "I'm exceedingly anxious of so doing; but there appears—"

"Some difficulty in getting what you require, Mem," continued Jacob, pretending to close his eyes—the fox—but in reality to peep at the face presented to his full view with less strain upon his modesty, and which something warm and glowing within told him in strict confidence that it was the loveliest—albeit ghastly pale—that his light blue, and somewhat fishy organs of vision had ever rested on.

"Perhaps you can render me some assistance," returned the lady, "for I'm very wearied and—" she hesitated to conclude the sentence, and the words died upon her lips.

Jacob Giles's curiosity received a fresh

stimulus from this, and with pricked ears he almost gasped, "very wearied and—"

"Ill, Sir, I would have said," she added, in a subdued tone, and glancing furtively at the child.

"Very wearied and very ill!" ejaculated Jacob, as the gimblet of compassion drilled its way straight as an arrow to his sensitive core. "What can be done, my dear Mem? What can *I* do?"

"Is there no place near wherein I can have an hour's rest?" she rejoined, faintly, "I am much in want of it."

"To be sure there is, Mem," said Jacob Giles, encouragingly. "My shop's not a quarter of a mile off, and over it there's a snugger, much at your service. Sometimes, Mem, this snugger, in the hot weather, and when the new cheeses come in fresh, doesn't smell as one could wish; but at the present moment, Mem, there's nothing

less sweet in it than a pot of mignonette and a handful of woodbine."

"I am deeply sensible of your proffered kindness," replied the stranger, in a tremulous voice, "and will accept the offer with heartfelt thankfulness."

Turning to retrace her footsteps, she staggered, as if a sudden faintness had overcome her; and had not Jacob's ready hand been near, to render the required support, she probably might have fallen to the ground.

"There, my dear Mem," said Jacob, drawing the lady's arm through his own, with a secret resolve that she should have a night's rest in the snuggerly at least, if not a week's. "There, there, my dear Mem! a glass of my sparkling gooseberry will soon set all things straight. Yes, yes. The day's warm and close, and you're travel-worn. There, lean on me. I'm stronger than I look, much stronger;" and with many such

terms and phrases, he conducted his unknown guest, tenderly and in silence, towards the promised haven of his snugery.

As may be visibly perceived in the mind's eye, without the smallest stretch of the imagination, the inhabitants of Grundy's Green were more than ordinarily moved with the sight of Jacob Giles leading the unknown lady through the village; and many heads were thrust from door and window, and gazes of bewilderment exchanged, as they neared his domicile. But when the door was gained, and he was palpably seen to point the way through the shop, and by a waving motion of his dexter hand, invite the strangers to mount the stairs leading to the snugery, no common pen can describe the excitement prevailing from one end of Grundy's Green to the other. The circumstances surrounding, as with a haze, this unprecedented event, had now become so

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far beyond the reach of the highest-flown speculations, that mute amazement took possession of each and all. Even the most prone to gossip, with one consent appeared to abandon the use of their tongues, and, for once in their lives, to feel the total inadequacy of the gift of speech.

“There, Mem,” said Jacob, throwing open the door of his snugery, and exhibiting the economy of the interior with no little satisfaction, “I beg you’ll make yourself at home. Let me, my dear Mem,” continued he, wheeling a well-cushioned sofa to the open window, “assist you. There, now take your rest, and don’t let the thought of starting come into your head.”

“You are very kind,” replied the stranger, in a feeble and exhausted tone, as she dropped upon the sofa.

“Not at all,” rejoined Jacob, flying about the room in the greatest haste to accomplish

something; but what that something was, it is impossible to conjecture, as he nearly upset all the fire-irons, two chairs, and the coal-scuttle. "Not at all," repeated he, "far from it."

"Clara," said the lady, "come here, love, and let me untie your bonnet."

"Permit me, Mem," returned Jacob, and the succeeding instant he began fastening the child's bonnet strings in such a complication of the hardest knots, that there appeared little likelihood of their ever finding mortal fingers to untwist them.

"I think, Sir," said Clara, looking upwards with an appealing look, for her neck began to ache most painfully, "that you had better let mamma try."

"My dear little dear," replied Jacob, "I'm precisely of your o-pinion," and as the task was transferred to abler hands, and Clara's clustering nut-brown curls fell upon

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her shoulders like the tendrils of the wild hop-vine, the little general shopkeeper's eyes became rivetted as upon a picture of transcendent beauty.

Indeed, no limner's art could trace features of greater childish loveliness. Her dark violet eyes were fringed with long web-like lashes, black as a raven's feather, and the finely-arched eyebrows looked like two thin strokes from a pencil's point. Lofty, and white as polished ivory, was the brow, and the delicately chiselled, and slightly aquiline nose was only surpassed in beauty by the red pouting lips, which the birds might have pecked for cherries red and ripe. Upon her cheeks, the tinge of the ripening peach spread its shade, and, above all, the sunny expression of her features betokened hidden beauties of far greater worth. With a slight and even fragile figure, Clara possessed no appearance of that lurking and

insidious disease, which often nips the bud ere it blossoms. There was health in her bounding step and joyous tone, and, although now and then a cloud of melancholy fell upon her face, it was only when her eyes became thoughtfully fixed on those of her mother, and then sad reflections seemed to rise of coming sorrows whose shades were cast before.

After several futile attempts to arrange the fire-irons in their assigned position, Jacob Giles made a dive—for nothing more of him was left visible than the skirt of his coat—into a deep cupboard, or recess, placed in a corner of the room, and began drawing forth, in rapid succession, the varied stores contained within it: oranges, cakes, gingerbread, plums, nuts, raisins, apples, pears, biffins, bottles of gooseberry, currant, ginger, and cowslip wines, in addition to a capacious jar of cherry brandy; all of which he begged

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and entreated might meet with a concentrated and simultaneous attack, without the further waste of a moment.

“My dear Mem,” said Jacob, enthusiastically, and his eyes sparkled almost as brightly as the wine which he now gurgled from the bottle, “take a glass of my own importation; I mean my own making. Better gooseberry,” continued he, “was never squeezed from gooseberries.”

Without waiting for assent or dissent, the hospitable general shopkeeper plied his guests so bountifully, that had his directions been complied with with anything like strictness, they must literally have been choked with sweets.

Greatly, however, to the mental uneasiness of Jacob Giles, he saw not the slightest possible progress made in the demolition of the multifarious good things which he had so liberally provided. The strangers

expressed their grateful thanks for the kindness displayed by their entertainer; but Clara stood with an arm encircling the neck of her mother, who reclined upon the couch in a manner portraying the greatest exhaustion, and neither seemed disposed to yield to his pressing solicitations to try the "excellent gooseberry." "Presently," said the latter, slightly raising herself, and speaking in a tone scarcely above a whisper, "presently, Sir, I hope to be sufficiently recovered to partake of your hospitality; but, if I may venture to express a wish, without giving offence, it is to be left alone for a brief half hour."

"Alone!" exclaimed Jacob, "*to be sure*, my dear Mem. Neither man, woman, nor child shall disturb ye. I see you want quiet, and quiet you shall have. Yes, yes, leave that to me. If anything's wanted," continued he, addressing himself to Clara,

“touch that hand-bell on the table, my dear little dear, and—and—and I’ll fly to serve ye. My maid-of-all-work, or housekeeper, as she calls herself, is as deaf as an adder; but quicker ears than mine—probably from their length—were never known, I should say;” and with this humorous panegyric upon his organs of hearing, Jacob Giles made as nimble an *exit* as a pair of lean legs, encased in drab, short, anti-continuations, and ribbed cotton stockings, can well be imagined capable of accomplishing.

“Are you very ill, dear Mamma?” said Clara, as the door closed upon the ribbed cotton stockings, and, as she spoke, she twined her arms fondly around her mother, and pressed her cheek closely to hers.

“I hope not, dearest,” was the reply.

“But, tell me what you think,” rejoined Clara, earnestly.

“It may be only fatigue,” returned her

mother, "and I trust a little rest may soon restore me."

"I never saw you look so pale—so very pale, before," added the child, as tears began to steal from her eyelids, and course themselves down her cheeks.

"Don't weep, dearest one," said her mother. "It will but increase my paleness to see you thus. Come, come," and she drew her closer to her bosom.

CHAPTER II.

It was a thick watch which Jacob Giles wore in his fob. Round, roomy, and not unlike a turnip in shape, it might have been used for a warming-pan at a pinch.

How often did the little general shop-keeper tug at the bunch of burnished seals which dangled at the end of a steel chain, and drag this corpulent keeper of time's stealthy progress, to mark the minutes as they passed. It was a long half-hour, one of the longest that ever trailed its weary

length over the index of a dial, and Jacob began to entertain suspicions that he must have omitted to give it its customary wind up, and held it occasionally to his ear, to test the accuracy of his fears. There was the well-remembered tick-tick, however, which first saluted him upon receiving it as a guerdon from his master, at the expiration of his apprenticeship, forty years ago, and more.

Jacob Giles started as if a galvanic shock had thrilled through his nerves. The shrill and piercing tongue of the hand-bell rang through the house, and, with a heart beating a succession of double-knocks in his breast, he dropped the cheese-taster, and rushed up the stairs with the wings which fear often lends to heels far less agile than the little general shopkeeper's.

"What's the matter?" cried he, as he jerked the door of the snugery back upon

its hinges; but the scene which presented itself afforded sufficient explanation.

The apparently lifeless form of the lady laid stretched upon the couch, while the child was on her knees, wildly clasping her hands, and giving expression to the most poignant grief. Bloodless and inanimate, the mother looked beyond all human aid, and her features resembled those carved from a block of the whitest marble.

“Stay, stay!” cried Jacob, as he placed a hand upon the cold and clammy brow of the stranger. “It is but a fainting fit. Here,” continued he, offering a vial of hartshorn, but so rapid were his movements, that it is impossible to say whence he procured it; “hold this so, my dear little dear; just so, not too close. There, nothing can be better, while I go for a medical man. He shall be here sooner

than convenient despatch can bring him, rest assured;" and with this fixed resolve to hasten the advent of the medical man, he made a departure distinguished only for its abruptness.

True to his word, Jacob scarcely appeared to have turned his heel upon the scene, when he returned, dragging firmly by the arm a diminutive, podgy, bald-headed man, gasping convulsively for breath.

"Now," said Jacob, "there's your patient, Doctor Grimes. Let us witness an exhibition of that skill, Sir, which has exalted you among the practitioners of the county in general, and the neighbourhood of Grundy's Green in particular."

Doctor Grimes bowed, or, to be particular as regards this movement, the bald part of his head became more distinct and palpable as he acknowledged the compli-

ment, with lips pursed with a self-satisfied smile, as if conscious and convinced of its being earned on the merits of the cause.

“Humph, ha—a—ah!” ejaculated Doctor Grimes, shaking his head with a conventional air of professional mystery.

Jacob Giles whispered the ejaculation to himself, but seemed to derive no information from it.

“Nature,” began Doctor Grimes, with a slight preliminary cough, “and in speaking of nature,” continued he, pressing the well-pared and filbert-shaped nails of the two first fingers of his right hand on the faint and fluttering pulse of his patient’s left wrist, “I mean *human* nature, can only bear an amount of exhaustion proportionate to the stamina acting as the supply. Now whenever,” and Doctor Grimes spoke like a man who considered he had

studied his subject, "the physical becomes so far expended, as to be minus, and the exhaustion plus; what is the result?"

Jacob Giles felt somewhat at a loss to answer this query; but he was soon relieved from the difficulty by the loquacious practitioner taking up the thread of his own discourse, and returning an answer in a way most likely to suit the majority of questioners.

"The result is," resumed Doctor Grimes, "prostration of the animal functions, and not unfrequently a suspension of vitality itself."

During this soliloquy the child continued in a kneeling posture, with her large, dark eyes fixed with a mixture of dread and inquiry upon those of the speaker, and she only removed them to wipe the tears from her cheeks, as they coursed each other down in silent evidence of her grief.

The sufferer heaved a deeply-drawn sigh, and Clara pressed closer to her mother's side, when Doctor Grimes, taking her hand in his, gently raised her from the ground, and said, as he divided the clustering curls from her brow, "Air is an aliment of which our patient stands most in need. Be composed, and leave her for a few moments," continued he, "and all will be well."

"O Sir!" exclaimed the child, in a passionate burst of sorrow, "do not take me from my mother—my dear, dear mother," and she struggled to release herself from his hold.

"Nay, nay," rejoined he, in a tender voice, and drawing Clara towards him, "I had no such cruel intention, my little—little—little"—the doctor was at a clear loss for a titular, but, after a pause, added "seraph."

“To be sure not,” added Jacob, soothingly. “Don’t take on so, my dear little dear,” and the general shopkeeper found himself the succeeding minute nursing on his knees the sorrowful little Clara, who buried her face in his prominent shirt frill, to the great detriment of the starch, and exactness of its arrangements.

Doctor Grimes now prepared to make a beginning of that professional skill so laudatory spoken of by Jacob Giles, and he turned up the cuffs of his coat-sleeves, conveying symbolically, perhaps, the intelligence of an approaching fight, or wrestle with the ills and ailments of his patient, and from some secret depth of his garments extracted an ominous case of instruments, which he placed on a table within reach, as it appeared, to prove that he was alike prepared for extracting a molar, to the fixing of a tourniquet.

At this juncture the invalid, after an involuntary shudder vibrating through her frame, opened her eyes, and seeing Clara nestling among Jacob Giles's crimped cambric, a smile passed over her wan features, and extending her arms, the child leaped towards her, and both became twined and locked in an embrace of which those only loving and beloved know the value.

"O Mamma!" cried Clara, "I have been so frightened. Tell me, pray tell me, that you are well again."

"I am better, dear one," replied her mother, faintly.

"But not well," added Doctor Grimes, again bringing the bald patch to a front view of the spectator, as he bowed himself into notice. "It does not require, Madam, one to be deeply versed in the science of a pharmacopolist to discover that you

are *not* well," continued he, with emphasis on the negative.

"And under the misfortunate circumstances, Mem," chimed in Jacob Giles, gently shampooing the tips of his fingers, "mustn't think of stirring from my humble snugger to-day."

"Nor for several days," said Doctor Grimes sternly; for when the vision of a bill presented itself, there was nothing more inimical to the doctor's feelings than for it to be dispelled "like the airy trace of nothing." "We require," resumed he, closing his eyes, and again pressing his well-pared nails upon his patient's feeble pulse; "we require," and Doctor Grimes appeared to be reading by means of clairvoyance, "rest, gentle stimulants, and a general setting to rights, if I may so express myself, of a system suffering from organic debility, and inflammatory

action. That is *my* opinion," and Doctor Grimes coughed a firm defiance, as if he should much like to see the man, without loss of time, who would dare to oppose it.

"And a co-rect one," observed Jacob, renewing the process of chafing his fingers, "you may rest assured. My friend, the doctor here," continued the general shopkeeper, with appealing humility, "if I may be bold enough so to call him—"

Doctor Grimes expressed a condescending acquiescence by bringing his bald patch a few inches nearer his feet.

"And as I therefore *do* call him," continued Jacob Giles, "is a medical man who has brought scores of matrons safely through their confinements, vaccinated hundreds of infants, drawn countless teeth, and physicked, cupped, bled, blistered, and clystered generations upon genera-

tions. I need scarcely say," said Jacob, "that my friend, the doctor, has had *some* experience."

"I have no doubt but the treatment which I shall receive at your hands, Sir," replied the invalid, "will be most judicious. But I fear," continued she, addressing Jacob, with a look so full of gratitude and thankfulness, that it well nigh turned the solid muscle of his heart into a solution "in remaining your inmate for the time named, that I shall be greatly trespassing upon your kindness."

"Precisely the opposite point of the compass, Mem, so to speak," rejoined Jacob. "I couldn't part with you, Mem, for a considerable premium."

And then other kind words—words perhaps, which soothed a pain never to be healed—were spoken, and replied to, and Doctor Grimes, in the plenitude of

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his wisdom, hastened away to prepare such potions as were never yet surpassed; and when Clara and her mother were left alone, they wept less for sorrow than love for one another.

CHAPTER III.

THE Harrow and Pitchfork, that well-known sign of the village hostelrie, has been mentioned ; but not the hostess of the hostelrie, Mistress Twigg. There was no graft of a crab upon a pippin in Mistress Twigg ; for a more jolly, round and red-faced, blue-eyed, it must be added, corpulent dame, never foamed from the tap a tankard of ale, nor mixed in goblets fermented liquors of many kinds, and, possibly, qualities. She was always very neat and comely, was Mistress Twigg. It was generally supposed, and as generally believed, that she possessed,

once upon a time, the legal right and title of a husband, *in fee* ; but who, or what Twigg was, or what became of him ; whether he died as became a Christian, between the domestic sheets, or drowned himself, or hastened his own decease by means of arsenic, laudanum, hanging, or any other of the popular means for cutting short the uncertain thread of life, no one seemed to entertain the most trifling interest. Poor Twigg ! it really might reasonably be conjectured that he had been a mere will-o'the-wisp, a phantom, a myth, a nothing.

It is but a speculative simile ; but, as planets eclipse the light of parasites and lesser luminaries, so might have operated the effulgent rays of the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork upon the pale glow-worm lamp of the pitiable Twigg. He was as a sound for which memory found no echo.

And there, in the bar-parlour—and of bar-parlours it was the pink of pinks—sat the paramount mistress of the Harrow and Pitchfork, commanding a comprehensive view of all and everything worthy of her attention. Not an ingress or egress could be effected without coming under her immediate scan, and with the keen perception of the necessity of guarding herself, her rights, and immunities from imposition (which, as a forlorn widow, she both thought and said was indispensable), Mistress Twigg measured a doubtful customer in the space of time fitly to be described as a twinkling. There was no want of decision among Mistress Twigg's characteristics.

With as dazzling a cap as ever crimson ribbon fluttered in, and jauntily placed upon a head over which forty-and-six summers had barely passed—Mistress Twigg

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disclaimed the small change, and stuck to the principal amount—without a single hair of the glossy brown curls being tinted with the silver hue of declining years, and kept in close order by a fillet of black velvet passed across the brow, the hostess appeared entombed in a reverie. Her chin—and a soft, crummy, double chin it was—creased with the tightened ribbon beneath it, and finishing in a conspicuous bunch of bows and ends, close under the left ear, was lowered even to her bosom. Now, with the full knowledge of the delicacy of touching upon this particular point of Mistress Twigg's person, it still seems absolutely necessary for the completion of her portrait with anything like truthfulness, that it should be stated that a more prominently-developed bosom was not often to be met with. Indeed, Mistress Twigg, as a half length, would have looked in this

respect, sadly out of proportion. As it was, however, her majestic figure smoothed and chiselled down this detriment; and there were no handsomer women, save in the opinions of her own sex, within a wide circle of Grundy's Green, than the popular hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork.

In her toilet, too, great nicety was observable in the setting off those personal charms, albeit upon an extensive scale, with which nature had so liberally endowed her; and from the crimson ribbon, to which reference has before been made, to the small silver buckle glittering on her pointed slipper, Mistress Twigg evinced a taste of no ordinary kind. Her black silk mantua was none of your cheap, faint, and flabby description, but gave due notice of her approach, by the loud rustling of its thick substantial folds, encompassing her form in perfect waves; and the kerchief, neatly

pinned across the aforesaid prominently-developed bosom, might have rivalled in whiteness the fresh-blown lily, or the snowflake whirling in its course. At her girdle hung a complicated bunch of polished keys, which jingled musically as she walked; and with these instruments of her housewifery, the slight sketch of Mistress Twigg shall be brought to a finish.

A privileged few were admitted to the bar-parlour; but only of the choicest kind, who might be ranked as the reigning favourites at the Harrow and Pitchfork. And here this picked and selected band would combine a little flirting with their political discussions, and, over their pipes and potent mixtures, panter Mistress Twigg upon the chances of a change of condition, and convey a flattering surprise that the alteration had not taken place long since. It might certainly be astonishing, but to

any hitherto serious advance, the widow had snuffed out love's flame as abruptly and effectually as extinguishing, by the same measures, the weak beam of a farthing rushlight. In vain had Jacob Giles himself, to the great scandal of his deaf and ascetic housekeeper, Bridget, entered the lists. Mistress Twigg felt proud, she said, of the honour, and entertained not the smallest doubt concerning the general shopkeeper's sincerity of feeling, or the extent of his pecuniary resources; but—and here shall be closed the continuation of what was said, for Jacob felt an icy chill run down the centre of his back, and he quitted the bar-parlour for his home, by no means happier, but better informed upon the state of the siege he had laid to the widow's affections.

If not in the same stereotyped phrase, each candidate for her hand met with a corresponding rebuff, and the hostess of the

Harrow and Pitchfork remained from summer's prime to winter's gloom, the seasons round, a torturer of hearts and puzzler of brains.

It seems ridiculous to recapitulate a fact so lately recited, but, for the thread to be taken up where it was dropped with abruptness and considerable indifference towards the linking of events in the tale to be unfolded, it behoves the chronicler to repeat that Mistress Twigg, at the moment of her introduction into these pages, was buried in a reverie. Now, to the person of a chronicler there is a privilege ceded, to divulge even the thoughts of a woman's brain; diversified as they often are, and erected on as shifting a basis as the well-known Goodwin Sands. But, with becoming respect for the privacy of female reflections, those of Mistress Twigg shall not be exposed to the peering gaze of curiosity, and she

shall be left in sole possession of her own secret, be it one even more than well worth knowing.

The widow sighed—and a sigh of greater power seldom escaped a capacious human bosom—when her attention was arrested by the presence of a stranger, who, in silence, was apparently waiting her pleasure to be served.

With a hurried gait Mistress Twigg rose from her seat, and was not a little surprised as she came forward, to see the stranger raise a hand in a stiff mechanical form to his brow, and salute her in true military style.

Like the majority of her sex, the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork admired the gallant defenders of her country with a fervour amounting to devotion, and, although the person before her could not be described as a dashing young sergeant,

neither was he arrayed in winning regimental scarlet; yet Mistress Twigg, by intuitive perception, knew that the straight, thin, wiry-figured individual standing before her, as upright as a ramrod, was a soldier—ay, every inch a soldier, from head to heel.

“What may you please to have, Sir?” inquired Mistress Twigg, with her softest accent and sunniest smile.

“Thank you, Marm,” replied the stranger in a deep bass voice, and dropping his words singly from his lips like a charge of small shot, “a pint o’ the real old scratch-me down wouldn’t be amiss after a hot day’s march.”

The crimson ribbons fluttered and shook in Mistress Twigg’s jaunty cap as, with an inward explosion of mirth, she admitted that “the real old scratch-me-down” was the

title of a liquid with which she was not familiar.

“Well, Marm,” rejoined the veteran—for he was old, and his bronzed features bore evidence of the effects of distant climes, and a wide white seam, passing transversely from the right side of his cheek to his chin, left an impression that the hand that carved it might have met with as fair a requital—“well, Marm,” repeated he, “p’raps you may know the liquor as the double, rasping, choke-your-vitals stifler.”

Again the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork was at fault, and she made the confession, accompanied by sundry coquetish nods of the head, which shook the crimson ribbons, and set them quivering like aspen leaves in the summer wind.

“Humph!” ejaculated the stranger, assuming an expression of astonishment.

“Never heard of the double, rasping, choke-your-vitals stifler, eh?”

Mistress Twigg had again to admit her total want of information on the subject, and never, perhaps, looked to greater advantage, at least in her riper years, as she conveyed the intelligence in a way which may be said to have been one of the most winning in her category.

“Very good, Marm,” continued he, in a sententious tone, “then p’raps you may identify its reverse when I call your innocent notice to the misfortune of having taken a pull at a pot of out-an’-out, no-mistake, set-you-going, double-me-up, pinch-me-tenders, which almost drew the eyes out o’ my head at the canteen, not two miles off.”

“The Spit and Chicken!” said Mistress Twigg, with a sudden acidity curdling her voice and manner. “I quite expect,” and

the widow closed her eyes with resignation as, from the best tap of her best brewing, she proceeded to fill a bright and shining tankard, "I quite expect," repeated she, "to hear a case of poisoning or two in that quarter before long. In good truth, I'm only surprised that it's not taken place before this, Sir; for they say—I mean everybody says—that the way in which the Spit and Chicken doctor their beer, makes it more fit for a horse's drench than a Christian's stomach."

"And what everybody says to be true," returned the veteran, taking the tankard from the widow's hand, and passing it slowly to his lips; "it's no use declaring it to be a lie, Marm. I found that out some years ago," continued he, "and acted upon it accordingly. I'm an old soldier, Marm," and as he spoke, he winked a clear, penetrating grey eye, which looked to possess the powers

of a gimblet, as it glanced from a shaggy fringe of hair overhanging the lid.

“So I suspected, Sir, from the first,” added the widow, watching with infinite satisfaction the relaxing of the stranger’s features from the unquestionable glow of pleasure which the draught instilled through the intricacies of his system. “There’s no mistaking a military man,” continued Mistress Twigg. “If one wants to refresh one’s eyesight with what’s polite, genteel, and I may say noble, one must see a military man, Sir.”

“Adzooks!” exclaimed the old soldier—and if his physiognomy gave any trace to the impressions operating within, an “old soldier” in more senses than one—“Adzooks!” repeated he, again saluting Mistress Twigg professionally, “but you talk, Marm, more like the lass who warbled, ‘If I had a beau for a soldier I’d go.’”

"There's no saying, Sir, what I might have done in other days," rejoined the widow; "fortunately for me, perhaps, temptation was not put in my way. In my young, or," continued she, correcting the phrase with a sound not unlike a slight hic-cough, "I should say younger days, I had no opportunity of coming in contact with the military; and when the pleasure was granted to me by the force of circumstances, my name—" the end of her nose twitched, as if the reminiscence was far from an agreeable one—"was Twigg."

"Ha!" ejaculated the veteran, "many of your sex, Marm, change their names a shave or two too quick. Shouldn't wonder now," said he, lifting a hat, by no means improved by wear and exposure to the elements, and exhibiting a head as white as a cauliflower, "had we but met a quarter of a century since, or *ra-ther* more, it might

have been Crump, Marm, Missis Corporal Crump."

The relict of the departed Twigg could scarcely do otherwise than feel flattered at the suggested likelihood, and with the crimson bows in a perfect ague fit, simpered and laughed, and said, "Corporal Crump was an impertinent man, that he was, to talk any such nonsense; but it was so like the military. For her part, she wondered how the military could be so astonishingly impudent, but supposed a good deal lay in the drill."

"What's not natural, Marm," returned the old soldier, "comes, no doubt, by the corruption of evil communications. We often learn a trick or two by seeing the sleight-of-hand of our comrades."

"Very true," added Mistress Twigg, as if impressed with the sageness of the veteran's remark, "very true indeed;" and

then throwing open the swinging door which formed a portion of the horse-shoe counter and barrier between her and the Corporal, she invited him to a seat in the bar-parlour, and even begged him to be seated in her easiest of easy chairs.

With a manner remarkable for its total absence of restraint, hesitation, or shyness, Corporal Crump took possession of the deep, high-backed chair, as if it had been his undisputed birthright, and throwing himself back on its caressing cushions, stretched out his legs as a man may occasionally do when quite at home and considerably at his ease.

With a glance—and it required but one from those eyes—the old soldier surveyed the new and unexpected quarters in which he evidently found himself so much at home, and sweeping the whole contents of the apartment, measuring barely six feet by eight, into a mental inventory, seemed to

arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, upon coming to the teaspoons. The glasses standing in rows upon the shelves, looked bright as crystal, and the gigantic china punch-bowl on the table in the corner, had an appearance of solidity; there was an air, too, of freshness in the lemons, which hung in nets from the polished oak beam crossing the ceiling; but for Corporal Crump's vision, these were as nothing to the teaspoons.

"Amazingly comfortable, Marm," observed the veteran. "Head quarters for a General."

"You're good enough to say so, Sir," replied Mistress Twigg, occupying a seat opposite her guest. "The military are always so polite."

"I can make but a short halt in 'em, though," rejoined he; "for I must find a lady before sun-set, who started for this neigh-

bourhood yesterday morning, and whose servant I feel proud in saying I now am; but where she is, or why I did not get the promised orders by post, remain at this moment among the roll of things to be mustered."

"A lady!" repeated the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork, raising her eyebrows.

"Ay, Marm," resumed Corporal Crump, "Missis Somerset, widow of Lieutenant Somerset, of the King's Own Royals."

"Has she a child with her?" inquired the widow.

"An angel, Marm, in the shape of one," replied the veteran.

"Why, Heaven preserve us!" exclaimed Mistress Twigg, bringing the palms of her hands together with a loud crack, "Lor'-o'-mussee, goodness gracious, deary me! If your lady, Missis Somerset, widow of Lieutenant Somerset, of the King's Own Royals,

isn't at this very time at Jacob Giles's, the general shopkeeper, a little lower down on the right-hand side, past the direction post, not far from the church, up one flight of stairs, very ill."

"Very ill!" shouted the corporal, jumping from his reclining posture with far greater agility than his limbs appeared capable of performing. "Did you say very ill?"


"And am sorry that such should be the truth," rejoined the widow; but before she had completed the sentence, Corporal Crump had vanished with a suddenness which was seldom witnessed in the departure of a guest from the bar-parlour.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE is no more common style of architecture than that adopted by the builders of castles in the air. The projectors of these erections meet with so few obstacles of an engineering kind, that they are run up with a haste which may account for the materials frequently tumbling about their heads. Hope blows the bubbles with which they are cemented, and the dreamer beholds the fairy pile rise with magic speed and skill; and while his enraptured gaze is fixed upon the work of his own creation, he sees it dissolve




and vanish, like the mist of morning in the summer's sun. And yet who would say, "Build not thus?" "Of the earth, earthy," man toils from youth to age, from manhood's strength to life's decrepid wane, and leaves his unfinished task to crumble into dust. Of what to him is now the wealth for which he worked? Of what the prize for which he struggled? Of what the honours for which he craved? Look, within a narrow strip of ground he lies, turning into that earth from which he sprung. With the noblest and the most obscure, the worm deals alike. Be it, therefore, but fancy's idle vision, or the more solid fabric reared by labouring hands, the end is the same in all pertaining to mortal deeds. The waves of time roll on; ages come and pass, and the small remnant of their works is at length blotted out, and nothing lasts to tell either of those



who built their castles in the air, or raised them on the rock.

Few of the forked genus dealt less in high-flown flights of the ideal than Squire Woodbee. He, as was his custom to avow upon all fitting opportunities, and occasionally when the opportunities were sadly out of time, tune, and order, gave it as his opinion that there was nothing like matter of fact. A plain fact was the naked truth, and that was all he required to see, hear, read, or speak of. He wished his friends, neighbours, dependents, and in-dependents to regard him as a plain fact; and if in a bad humour, there was little difficulty in so doing; for Squire Woodbee out of temper was an exceedingly ugly fact. With him, as with his forefathers and fathers cotemporary, both trifles light as air, and matters onerous as lead, tended to disturb, agitate, excite, ruffle, and stand on end the fretful



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hackles of his spleen. He was of short stature, and shone brightly at the two extremities; for his respectable bald head brought forcibly to mind bees-waxed mahogany, and his shoes were resplendent as the mirror of blacking in which Warren's cosmopolite cat raised her feline tail and quarters. He might have been slight and slim once upon a time; but Squire Woodbee, at the fortunate moment of calling the attention of the reading public to his sayings and doings, had run a full stage towards the terminus of the journey of life, and was now in that condition known by the familiar titles of stout, full-habited, corpulent, and podgy. A waistcoat, long, wide, and deep, and—weather permitting—white as the heart it covered, gave an air of extreme respectability; and a black ribbon passed across it, to which was attached a small reading-glass, rather added to the respectable



effect. It could not be reasonably supposed that he was vain of his legs, for they were as devoid of the usual development, so conspicuous in those of the lacqueys of England's aristocracy, as a couple of flutes ; and yet Squire Woodbee exhibited their want of proportions in a pair of black silk stockings and "knees," which gave a want-of-balance, top-heavy appearance to the superstructure. If, however, the Squire was particular, precise, and—there is but one term applicable—"respectable" in these divisions of his attire, he was still more so in the cravat encircling his closely-shaven chin. In a witness box it could scarcely have failed to produce a most favourable impression on the collective wisdom of the Bench, the Bar, and the jury ; and the wearer would at once have been regarded as one whose testimony was unimpeachable.

Should the highest recognised authority

on noses be worthy of the credit with which it is generally received, then Squire Woodbee's was not the pattern to be envied; for it was bridgeless, and turned up like one of those happily approaching extinct animals, a canine pug's. His mouth, too, was far from being of the handsomest mould, as it had the appearance of an elongated button-hole, and his large, protruding eyes never looked at the same object in union. There was always a doubt in the mind of the observer when one of these organs was fixed on an object, what its fellow was peering at; for if ever a man literally looked two ways at once, that man was Squire Woodbee. That he might not lack the crowning point and finishing touch of respectability, the scanty moulding of hair surrounding the glossy and smooth surface, was slightly powdered, like blades of grass tipped with the hoar frost; and it may be boldly

alleged, without fear of contradiction, that better "getting up" could not be adopted for the character represented, and so ably supported by the head of the family of the Woodbees.

He had been a successful candidate for the favours of the proverbially fickle goddess, had Squire Woodbee; and in secret communion with himself, he traced much of the success attending his dainty steps on the ladder of life to the favourable impression which he left, like his shadow in the sun, of his undoubted respectability. With numbers, however, who look from a lofty pinnacle with dignified aspects upon their humbler and less fortunate neighbours, Squire Woodbee might have found, as the fly in amber, a slight difficulty in accounting for his position. From the obscurity of a grocer's apprentice, he advanced by degrees to be the sole representative of the old-established

and original shop in Farringdon Within, and the firm of "Shave, Paring, & Co." became a tradition of little interest in that locality. From the astute lessons learned with pointed readiness within the confines of the counter, Tobias Woodbee conceived the grand idea of adding greatly to the legitimate profits of trade by the illegitimate process of adulteration, and justifying the means by the end, quieted a few nauseous qualms of conscience by persuading himself into the belief that chicory was a wholesome mixture with coffee, and a birchbroom chopped fine, with an equal proportion of dried sloe leaves, could do no harm in the fragrant decoction of the beverage which "refreshes, but never inebriates." Fuller's earth, too, might have been discovered in his coarser kinds of "sugar," and many an imagination has been taxed to discover the causes for the effect in Tobias Woodbee's diversified

articles of commerce. And yet his weights and measures were true as the magnet; he paid his rent, rates, and taxes, drove a gig, and was called respectable. But the higher ambition climbs, the higher still it contemplates to soar, and at length Tobias coveted for the attributes of wealth, and with pleasing visions of Whittington and his cat, and other civic tales for thrifty and industrious youth, he longed for place and power. Neither had he to desire long in vain. When his gains were known by their reputed amount—for the world is not illiberal concerning the ways of men's means—and Tobias Woodbee fed with prodigal hand the widely diffused and increasing circle of his friends from viands, rich, rare, and dear; he seemed to possess a magic spell, and virtues were at once discovered in him, and capacities confessed which, if in existence, at least, had remained

dormant from the hour of his birth. If not born to honours, honours were now thrust upon him. It seemed, indeed, as if a struggle was continually going on, and each admirer strained his best energies to be in advance in the race of his fellow, and lay at the feet of Tobias Woodbee the humble tribute of his praise. Public assemblies toasted him as "the liberal patron of their noble institutions." On the hustings, his name was shrieked as "the friend of the poor and of civil and religious liberty." Testimonials were presented to him by smiling deputations, and mounting on the wings of favour, he at length sat robed and chained in the majesty of justice to expound the laws to evil-doers, and shake his respectable head with virtuous indignation at the revealed dark tales of crime, want, and misery.

The soundness of the cause, however, is generally estimated by its success; and as

Tobias Woodbee had risen to so proud a pinnacle, envy itself was silenced. There he stood—as he often said—“a fair example of what might be done by industry and thrift.”

But having won and worn these distinctions, Tobias, with feelings corresponding to those which caused Alexander's tears to flow, looked around for other conquests.

He was still a tradesman, although a capitalist. Bah! he would cut the shop, and, like the butterfly emerging from the state of grub, become a gentleman. With the promptness of thought, Tobias threw a hasty glance at the poetical effusions of the late lamented George Robins, and meeting with an earthly paradise in the voluminous list of eligible investments presented to public notice by that departed prince of auctioneers, he in due course became the proprietor of the Elysium, and took pos-

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session of the fine old mansion, with many a broad acre thereunto belonging, in the neighbourhood of Grundy's Green, called the Oaks.

So much for Tobias Woodbee's past history; now for the present.

CHAPTER V.

It was one of those mornings illustrative of life's chequered light and shade. The sun broke fitfully through the thick foliage of the trees, and flashed the dew-tipped grass in myriads of fairy lamps; and then, when at the brightest, a murky cloud, floating on the breeze, veiled the scene, and all was darkness, heaviness, and gloom.

The Oaks, like the gnarled trunks and widely-spreading branches of the trees rearing themselves around, and all pertaining to the old house, dated from a long

by-gone age. There was the fulness of time in the ivy twining luxuriantly around the stone casements, and even to the crooked chimneys, wherein many a jackdaw built a nest. There was the fulness of time in the grey-mossed gable ends jutting out, with the cramped-paned lattices which, to look through with anything like precision, required the closing of one eye. There was the fulness of time in the huge beams, black and worm-eaten, interlacing the walls, and running across each other at right angles, like the intricate meshes of a spider's web. Long narrow galleries ran from end to end, and steep staircases led nobody seemed to know where. For room succeeded room, and there were vaulted chambers, and dark passages, and capacious closets, perplexing to the imagination, to discover the design and uses for which they were intended. A stately mansion, how-

ever, was the Oaks, and a family, upon whose escutcheon was neither bar nor blot, had long dwelt beneath its roof. Generations came and passed with the mechanical order of the pendulum, and monuments of their virtues were raised and duly inscribed on the tablets above the tomb where the last of the race laid crumbling. At length came the prodigal—the waster, and with him the Oaks parted a long association as the home of his fathers.

Tobias Woodbee was now the Squire of the Oaks, and a prouder never yet claimed to be its master. All was his own, and he entertained the liveliest and most comprehensive view of doing with his own exactly as he pleased. He swept from the ground whole avenues of trees as intercepting to his view; levelled the rookery to the last stump by way of effectually ejecting the noisy colony, and so astonished the bats by

painting, plastering, and white-washing, that not a single member of the community but made a hasty and final retreat from the scene of modern improvements.

Before an open casement, commanding a view of the extensive, undulating park, Squire Woodbee sat opposite a table, on which were, what in domestic phraseology are termed "the breakfast things," separating him, as by a barrier, from his young and gentle wife, a lady regarded by the countryside in a far more favourable light than her rightful lord and master.

It would be anticipating a portion of the sequel to divulge, at this early stage, the why and wherefore of Squire Woodbee's marriage giving almost the flat denial to the allegation that unions are made in heaven, as a preliminary to their solemnization on earth. Sufficient for the present purpose,

in the gradual unfolding of a simple tale, to assert that their hands were joined, though not their hearts, and yet *one* would have broken rather than repined.

"My dear," said the Squire, with a strong clearing of his voice, and a "hah!" which seemed to be jerked from about the centre of his white waistcoat, "it appears to me," and he slowly placed his dexter hand among the folds of his shirt, and not far from the spot where his heart might be supposed to beat; "I say it appears to me that we must be thinking of something more than marbles, bats, balls, kites, tops, and hoops for our son Leonard."

"You said," replied the lady, raising a pair of dark-blue melancholy-looking eyes, and speaking in one of those voices which claim the attention from the sweet and

plaintive tone, "that he was to have a pony for his next birthday present."

"Pish!" ejaculated her spouse, irritably. "You are ever thinking of some indulgence or other. I mean," continued he, "that we must now begin to prepare him for the world. Books, Madam, books must take the place of toys, and the fooleries of infancy be thrown aside."

"Miss Baxter speaks most favourably of his progress," pleaded the mother; "and with very little assistance he read three whole pages of Jack the Giant Killer to me yesterday morning."

"Miss Baxter!" sneered the Squire in an under tone.

"And she expressed a hope," resumed his wife, who believed, in her innocence, that she was rendering the cause essential service, "to find him take an equal interest in Jack and the Bean Stalk, which is

chosen as the succeeding work of light literature for his perusal."

For a few seconds it appeared doubtful whether Squire Woodbee could keep within the confines of good breeding that sudden boiling up of spleen which this Baxterian programme for his son's improvement engendered; but placing a strong check upon the impulse to give vent to his indignation, he assumed a calmness of demeanour, and sternly rejoined, "Miss Baxter, as Leonard's governess—indeed, companion—will not enter these doors again."

The mother started, and her pale and delicate features became flushed, as if with alarm at these words.

"It is time," continued her husband, and he spoke with the air of a man whose mind required nothing to complete the resolve, "that Leonard should begin his studies in

earnest, and I intend that no one and nothing shall stand in the way of his advancement. Hitherto you, Alice, have had the control, and for a child—a mere child—perhaps there has been little to condemn in the general rules laid down for his health and recreation. He is certainly a thriving, handsome, affectionate, and good little knight.”

“But not strong,” interrupted the mother, with the deepest solicitude in her tone and manner. “I beseech you think of that. He is well and happy now; but believe me of so sensitive and fragile a nature that with harshness, it will shrink and wither as readily as a blighted flower.”

Squire Woodbee waved a hand as if he desired to be heard rather than spoken to.

“My son, Madam,” continued he, “if too tender for his duties must be hardened to them. I have made my way through the

world with rough weapons, the spade and pickaxe of industry and thrift, and it remains for him to complete the work with more polished tools. I lack, and with all my wealth cannot buy, that knowledge which early education cultivates and qualifies the man to become great among great men. With my opportunities I could do no more. The power which money gives, I possess. The honours and influence which it buys, I command; but there is something more within the compass of my ambition to be reached through my boy. I would have *him*”—and the Squire appeared to swell with the sublimity of the thought—“grasp the highest academical prizes, shine in the senate, and be one of the rulers of the state. This, Madam, is the pride of a father’s heart; the light which shines for the future portion of my life. Few are content with that success which far exceeds

their most sanguine hopes, and I confess that I am not one of them. Had I been told, at the commencement of my career, that I should ever attain the distinction"—the white waistcoat became like the breast of a pouter pigeon—"that I should ever attain the distinction," repeated he, "which is accorded to me by the world at large, I might have doubted the possibility, I might have said, with *that* I shall be satisfied.

"But a thing won is done. Fools look back, *I* look forward, and like a man who deserves to be called wise, because he knows himself, I know my own incapacity to stretch beyond my present tether. In my son, however, I shall yet reach a wider circle of ambition. He will be rich through me, wise through me, and—"

"Happy, let us pray," interrupted the mother, "through God."

"Oh, certainly," added the Squire. "By all means. Amen."

With the bound of healthful, joyous spirits, a boy now burst into the room with a large black spaniel jumping at a ball, which he held at arm's length above his head. He was a beautiful fair-haired child, with silver ringlets divided upon his brow, and hanging in clusters down his shoulders. With a smooth and lofty brow, which, at a glance portrayed an imaginative and sensitive disposition, his features possessed a striking resemblance to those of his mother, and were chiselled in the same delicate and feminine mould. The tint of the peach was on his cheeks, and beneath the fine web-like lashes a pair of laughing eyes glistened as if tears had been long and far between strangers to them. From his figure he could scarcely have seen less than eight summers; but the almost infantine

expression of his face might have led the observer to conjecture that he was some two or three years younger.

“Down, Blackthorn, down,” he cried, as the dog struggled to reach the ball. “Oh, Mamma, make him be quiet!” continued he, throwing himself upon his mother’s lap, “I’ve lost my breath with playing, and he’s so rough.”

To the gentle chiding of his mistress the dog at once abandoned his design upon the ball, and, from a somewhat boisterous scene tranquillity was restored. “We’ve had such a scamper through the park,” said the child, turning his face to his mother, and twining an arm fondly around her neck. “We ran to the witch elms, and then round the lake, home,” continued he, exultingly.

“Leonard,” returned his father, holding out a hand, “I wish to speak to you!”

With ill-concealed reluctance the boy quitted his mother's side, and slowly approached the chair of authority like one about to receive a dreaded judgment.

"The past with you, my dear boy," commenced the Squire, placing a broad, inflammatory-looking hand upon the silken curls of his son—"the past with you, my dear boy," repeated he, with a mingled air of grandeur and patronage, "has been a butterfly's holiday. You have done, and been required to do, little more than to run to the witch elms and then round the lake home, to apply your own words in a figurative sense. But the time has come—and I was just speaking of it—when you must occupy your attention with matters of a far graver nature. Strict rules will be laid down for a proper division of the day, and play can only form but a small proportion of it. A gentleman with whom I

have corresponded of late," continued Squire Woodbee, throwing back a lapel of his coat as the white waistcoat distended, "will arrive in the course of the week, in the capacity of your tutor."

Mrs. Woodbee started at these words, but said nothing.

"And," resumed he, "no one but myself will be allowed to interfere with his arrangements in connection with his pupil. Work must now be begun with earnestness of purpose, and I hope to see it carried on with my son's best efforts to profit by the instruction which he will receive. A willingness in this respect cannot fail to prevent much unpleasantness, if not pain, to many; for, if persuasion should prove unsuccessful in securing proper attention to study, I shall not hesitate to permit coercive measures. Upon this subject, however, I shall say little more. In a day

or two Doctor Starkie"—Squire Woodbee smiled as if a good thing was about to be dropped from his pursed lips—"will take the place of Miss Baxter, and I've little doubt that an Oxford double-first prizeman will soon rouse your mental energies, Leonard, to find greater charms than those as yet discovered in Jack the Giant Killer, or in his brother of the bean-stalk."

During this delivery the boy stood listening with the deepest attention. A finger was pressed thoughtfully upon a lip, and he kept his unblinking eyes riveted on those of his father with an expression of painful interest. For a few seconds after the Squire had concluded addressing him, he continued in the same attitude, and it was not until his mother called him gently by his name, that he appeared to be roused from a kind of reverie.

"Will the gentleman tell me stories like

Miss Baxter?" at length inquired he, "and play with me and Blackthorn as she does?"

"An Oxford double-first prizeman," rejoined his father, in a humor still of the waggish kind, "can scarcely be expected, Leonard, to be so fruitful of old Mother Hubbard, the popular tenant of a well-known cupboard, and other lays of a similar kind, as our respected friend Miss Baxter. But," continued he, "I dare say he will amuse you with the romances of Ovid and Æsop in their original tongue. And as for Blackthorn, perhaps, we shall find him, ere long, with spectacles on nose, solving the mysteries of Euclid."

"What rooms do you intend Dr. Starkie to occupy?" asked Mrs. Woodbee.

"Those at the north end of the picture gallery," responded her husband, "and of which some idle tales are told."

"They are very gloomy," observed she.

“Which may account for the gossip,” added the Squire. “But there the two will be apart to themselves, undisturbed, secluded, and alone. The seeds of knowledge spring strongly in such quiet nooks, and the mind, absorbed in its subject, expands better in the dark closet than the lighted hall.”

Upon this Squire Woodbee rose from his seat, and elevating his chin above the creaseless folds of his cravat, quitted the room with a bright vision of his son's future glory, the germs of which he had himself sown, and would see blossom.

CHAPTER VI.

CORPORAL CRUMP was never at a loss for the ways and means of making himself as comfortable, and as much at ease, as the nature of circumstances would permit. He felt it as part of his duty, to be observed with the strictest military precision, to extract from the present all the enjoyment with which it was laden; and if a few drops of acid mingled with the nectar, the old soldier did his best to sweeten the cup with good humour and the spirit of contentment.

"It's no use grumbling," was his frequently-repeated assertion. "Obey orders, do your duty, and whether you're shot, sabred, or die of age or fever, it's all one in the end. Nothing like peace of mind in this particular. My rule for living is:—lamb's-wool stockings, head cool, tender mutton, good liquor, with the thoughts slightly turned towards heaven. It doesn't do, Sirs," and then the corporal would shake his head, as if impressed with the solemnity of the subject, "for us to be *too* anxious about another and a better world. It looks, d'ye see, as if we were dissatisfied with this; and it's my belief, when that's the case, the fault lies, by a long shot, more with ourselves than any other quarter."

Among the corporal's striking characteristics, was a remarkable capacity he possessed of making himself "at home" wherever fate, inclination, or duty might bend

his footsteps. The moment the old soldier entered a house, he was "at home" in the most comprehensive sense of the term, and appeared to have been in possession for a much longer period than its oldest inhabitant. He seemed to know the softest and easiest of chairs without a trial, took the coziest corner by the hearth, and had a happy knack of securing those comforts to himself which chance or design dropped in his path.

It may be averred with confidence that Corporal Crump never looked more "at home" than as he sat one evening, *tête à tête* with the little tender-hearted general shopkeeper, in a small, dark back settlement, called the shop parlour. A dreary and confined apartment was the shop parlour; and yet, as the old soldier reclined in a deep-seated elbow chair, with a pipe between his lips, and a glass of reeking brandy and water of the shade of Spanish mahogany by his

side, the influence of the locality appeared to be entirely lost upon him. A solitary candle, with a long flaring wick, from which a dull leaden light proceeded, stood on a small round table between them, and on the opposite side Jacob Giles silently sat, resting his head upon a hand, while an elbow supported both.

The shop was closed, and a harsh-toned timepiece in the corner tick-tacked the units of time by which ages have been numbered in the past; and as the pendulum swayed to and fro, the corporal puffed forth slight volumes of smoke in exact measure with the sound. The coincidence was trifling; but it withdrew Jacob's attention from other thoughts, and roused him from a truly unsocial humour.

"You'll say I'm bad company to-night, Corporal," observed he, with an effort to shake off the evident gloom which oppressed him.

The old soldier took his pipe slowly from his lips, knocked the bowl upon the hearth to empty it of its ashes, and, after refreshing his inward man with a long and strong pull at the glass, replied, "Better company than good liquor and tobacco is seldom wanted by me, comrade. I don't care to talk much in such society, and never did."

"You're a man of the world, Corporal," rejoined Jacob, in a nervous, hesitating tone, as if about to introduce something of which he was afraid, "one who has seen a good many ins and outs, ups and downs, cranks, twists and turns, and can see a long way, if I may so express myself, without the aid of spectacles."

Corporal Crump drew his military figure stiffly up, and throwing out a chest, across which a black coat, rusty, threadbare, and worn was closely buttoned, placed his arms akimbo, and offered to "back his powers of

seeing further into the ensuing week or century than the widest-awake old campaigner that ever shouldered a musket."

"Some folks," continued he, "are like pig lead; you may grind for ever, but there's no getting an edge to their wits. Raw as young recruits, they begin the world without knowing the difference between the butt-end and the muzzle; and drill 'em as you may, it's both time and labour lost. It wasn't so with my family, comrade," continued he, giving a significant double knock on his *os frontis*. "The Crumps, Sir, come of a different stock."

Jacob entirely accorded in this opinion, and expressed it in terms both general and particular.

"What I was about saying, however," resumed the little general shopkeeper, still exhibiting a trepidation of manner, "that one who's so naturally sharp"—Jacob

Giles, in spite of his provincial inexperience, knew the force of well-timed flattery, and repeated, "so naturally sharp as you are, Corporal, can scarcely be ignorant of the whole true and particular history of the lady—God bless her!—who is now upstairs in my snugery—I trust to Heaven—asleep and comfortable."

Corporal Crump, as was his wont when any reference was made to his mistress, placed a hand to his brow, and respectfully saluted, as became a soldier, the object of his strange but devoted care and attention.

"To come to this point," said Jacob, with an unctuous gloss upon his countenance, and a voice open to improvement in its husky tone, "has cost me a world of screwing, Corporal; but my mind is of an inquiring turn, and I couldn't bear the pressure any longer. At the same time, if I'm wrong," continued he, with a gasp, "in seeking to

learn the whole true and particular history of my lady visitor—God bless her!—punish me, and don't say a word."

After a pause, which brought the unctuous, clammy moisture more palpably upon Jacob's brow, Corporal Crump cleared his bass voice, and rendering it more like a tenor, thus returned:

"We've been quartered here, I think, if my reckoning's good, just ten clear days, and you know no more about us than the man in the moon. Now if you'd been in my shoes, and I'd been in yours, we shouldn't have had a tale to tell, Sir, concerning ourselves, fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, or cousins, to the twentieth generation, in less than as many hours. But then," and the old soldier looked out of the extreme corners of his keen grey eyes, "I was not born yesterday, comrade, and the Crumps are the original blades

spoken of in history, as sharp, keen-set razors."

Jacob kept his eyes stedfastly fixed upon those of his companion; but thought it wiser to say nothing by way of interruption.

"So far from thinking it against the articles of war," continued the corporal, "or the rules of common sense, for you to seek to learn who we are through whom you're considerably adding to your future store of comforts in the next world by supplying ours in this, I consider it nothing but a right, plain, straightforward march, comrade."

The little general shopkeeper felt considerably relieved at these words, and the varnish upon his face became much less lustrous.

"I didn't volunteer the information before," said the corporal, settling himself in his chair as if he had taken upon himself

a task which would occupy some time to accomplish, "for this particular reason—I wished to learn, beyond any misgivings, whether your bosom was a worthy repository for the truth. It would have been easy enough for me to tell a lie. You can hardly believe, comrade, how particularly easy it is for me to shell out a tantariddle; and had you tried to get a peep into my sealed despatches too soon, it might ha' been that you would have met with a touch of what a Crump can do in the shape of a fable. As it is," continued he, with more of the air of the host than the guest, "I feel disposed to conclude that your bosom is a worthy repository for the truth, and consequently I'll tell ye the facts of the case, plain and unadulterated."

Jacob was now wound up to a pitch of curiosity, and he leant forward, with his ears pricked, to catch each syllable as it fell.

CHAPTER VII.

“ I’m not going,” said Corporal Crump,
“ to give ye the particulars of my own life,
only in so far as they may be considered
part and parcel of the history of my betters,
although, if I just break ground by saying
that, in the words of the old song—

‘ ’Twas in the merry month of May,
When bees from flower to flower do hum;
Soldiers marching, passing gay,
The village all flew to the sound of the drum ;’

and that I was one of them, it will be but
beginning the story at the right end. The

life and the drum, comrade, cockade and streamers, were too tempting for a farmer's boy on the sunny side of twenty, and, half afraid at my own act and deed, I took the shilling, and became one of my country's noble defenders, and full private on full pay. At the time of my enlisting, the whole of the Continent was bristling with bayonets, and the French were spreading more mischief throughout the countries they had overrun, than the devil himself in a gale of wind.

“As soon as I could be drilled into something like a soldier, and before I knew the difference between a sergeant's stripe and a corporal's, I was marched off for Spain, where I soon learned what was parade, and the gold and gammon of the profession, and the real downright hard knocks of active service.”

“Rumours, which kept our officers

always on the alert, marching, counter-marching, fatigue, heat, thirst, short rations, and bad food, were now the order of the day, and my feelings were particularly similar to those of a young lady of my acquaintance, who fell in love with a scarlet coat at a fair, and found the colour a deal faded when her eyes became more familiar to it in the barrack yard.

“The particular event, however, with which I have now to deal, took place in Brussels just previous to the battle of Waterloo; a battle, comrade,” continued the old soldier, pointing to the white seam running like the line of a map across his countenance, “wherein I got this brand. It was cut with something heavier than a pen-knife, and there was will and power in the elbow.”

Jacob Giles stooped forward, and examined the mark with apparently greater

interest than he had yet felt when his eyes rested upon the blemish.

“I must now tell you that attached to our corps was a young officer of the name of——” Corporal Crump lowered his voice into a whisper, and glancing cautiously round the dingy apartment, as if afraid of some eavesdropper being concealed in the murky light, added, “Somerset. I never knew how it was, but although he wore epaulettes, and I, as yet, had not my stripes, there was a good will, and, if I may so call it, kind of understanding between us, which may be formed between one in the ranks, and those above him, without either being forgetful of his duty, line, or position.

“Like the greater number of lieutenants attached to marching regiments, and poor chaplains without hope of promotion, Lieutenant Somerset was married. They all

do. It's constitoo-tional, I suppose," said the old soldier, with emphasis; "but the poorer a man is, the younger he marries, and the more children he gets. Somehow, too, his wife is sure to be a delicate creetur, with calico hands, pretty face, and one of eight or ten. I've seen it so, over and over twenty times told, in *my* life, and shall again, if ever I look for anything so common."

Perhaps it was a defect of the system, that a natural tendency to drought should prevent his continuing his narrative without moistening it at certain intervals, but Corporal Crump again diminished the contents of his glass ere he made further progress.

"The mate's gone," said he, shaking his head sorrowfully, "but a neater pair was never seen than the lieutenant and his wife. They used to be called the handsomest

couple in all the garrison; and, poor things! I'm sure they were the fondest. Save on duty, he was always with her, and even jealous of the moments which kept them separate. Young, poor, and, as I suspected, friendless, they kept together away from all, and seemed to have a little world within themselves, and none besides.

“Having been in garrison during the winter and spring, and occupying the private post of the lieutenant's own servant, there was plenty of time and opportunity to note down trifles which otherwise might have escaped my attention. Now, it occurred to me, one morning, upon seeing the lieutenant's wife stitching away at as small a piece of dimity as was ever cut in the shape of a night-cap, that it couldn't be for herself, and as her husband couldn't have got his fist into it, I concluded that the design wasn't for him. And yet what

wonderful pleasure both seemed to take in that little bit of dimity! I think I see 'em now," said the corporal, casting his eyes upwards, "at this very moment, sitting close together, like a couple of love birds. Her needle and thread are plying away at the little bit of dimity, and he's got an arm round her taper waist, now and then whispering something which makes her face mantle like a rose. Hah!" sighed the old soldier, "our happiest moments are often set on hair triggers!"

Jacob's bosom heaved a responsive sigh, but he ventured nothing further to interrupt the tale.

"As it is well known," resumed the narrator, "the Duke and our principal officers were shaking their heels at a ball when Blucher's despatch arrived, notifying that the French had crossed the Sambre, and were marching towards Charleroi and

Fleurus. By dad, Sir, but it put a halt to dancing! The tune was changed for another sort in about the quickest movement that was ever made by fiddlers. Drums beat, bugles sounded, and in a few ticks of the clock, the streets were lined with troops, pouring forth from houses, hay-lofts, cellars, stables, and every nook and corner forming the good and bad, rough-and-ready quarters of our men.

“Our corps were among the first to muster, and before the word was given to march, every man belonging to it was present, save—*one*.”

Corporal Crump rested here, and raising a fore-finger, as if to call his auditor's especial attention, slowly repeated the words.—“every man belonging to it was present, save—*one*.”

“The distance between Brussels and Quartre Bras is over twenty miles, and

before eight o'clock the cavalry, artillery, infantry, and waggon train, were on the march. By two in the afternoon, the fifth division, of which we formed a part, commanded by Sir Thomas Picton, arrived at Quatre Bras, and as we came up, and were forming into line, a body of French lancers charged, and thrust many a brave fellow's soul from earth to heaven.

"The fields of rye, growing almost to our shoulders, offered considerable hindrance to infantry movements, and the flights of the enemy's cavalry often swept down upon the columns, and cut them to pieces before they could form into square. But let a square be once formed," said Corporal Crump, and the old soldier's eyes glistened as he spoke, "and they might as well have charged the solid rock.

"As soon as it was possible, we formed in square, but in doing which two com-

panies were left out, and we had to see them butchered almost to a man, before our eyes, while each struggled like a lion to the last.

“For nearly two hours we fought with fearful odds against us; but fresh troops coming up from their different cantonments, not only enabled us to keep our position, but, at last, to drive back the enemy from the ground they had occupied during a part of the day. Fatigue prevented the infantry from pursuing them, and the cavalry not arriving till night-fall, the action was brought to an end just as darkness fell around us.

“If Ney, however, was beaten at Quatre Bras, our allies, the Prussians, were not so fortunate in the battle of Ligny. Inch by inch the ground was fought, and all was done that could be expected by Blucher’s brave and devoted troops; but Bulow’s

corps not having joined, they were outnumbered by the enemy. Men fought hand-to-hand, battalion against battalion. Within five hours the village of Ligny was six times taken and re-taken. Every wall, hedge, and fence, were fiercely attacked and defended; but unable to oppose the furious assaults any longer, Blucher determined upon a retreat, in order to unite himself with his fourth corps. The movement was made by the Prussian centre and right falling back upon Tilly in such firm and unbroken masses, that they were allowed to form within a mile of the battle while the Imperial Guard merely took possession of the heights which they had left.

“But what *am* I about?” said Corporal Crump, drawing a hand quickly across brow, as if dust or cobwebs had suddenly accumulated in the vicinity. “Here

are, in the field, instead of sticking to the nursery."

"Being in the field," returned the little general shopkeeper, warming on the subject, like a steak on the gridiron, "let us keep there, warrior! I love," continued Jacob, with a convulsive snort and wild flourish of the arms, "to hearken to battles lost and won. It fires my spirit, and makes me feel that, once upon a time, I myself could have fired a gun."

"In that case," added his martial companion, "we'll fight on, and finish what I've scarce begun. Fill my glass, comrade," continued he, pushing the now empty vessel, with a jerk, across the table; "I can't croak with a dry thorax."

CHAPTER VIII.

“THE retreat o’ the Prussians,” re-commenced the corporal, “obliged the Duke to fall back upon Genappe, and afterwards upon Waterloo. It has been said that, when making an inspection of the Netherlands, the year before, he observed that, ‘were he ever to fight a battle for the defence of Brussels, Waterloo would be the position he should choose.’ Be this as it may, this was the pit in which the bloodiest battle of modern times was to be fought, and the cocks were ready trimmed and spurred.

"The position which we occupied may be soon described. In the rear was a wood, through which a road ran from Brussels to Charleroi, and at a few short paces from the entrance stood the village of Waterloo, where the Duke established his headquarters.

"Our right was thrown back to a ravine near Merke Braine, and our left extended to a height above the hamlet of Ter-la-Haye. Both these villages being placed on a defile, offered strong posts against any attempts which the French might make for turning our flanks. Along the whole of our front was a gentle slope, and upon the crest of the ridge, where the Duke gave his well-known order to 'Up, Guards, and at 'em,' the first line of infantry was stationed. At the bottom of the slant, and immediately in front of our left centre, stood the farmhouse of La Haye Sainte, occupied by a

detachment of Hanoverians; while the second line, placed in a kind of hollow ground, was greatly sheltered from the fire of the enemy. The cavalry, under the Marquis of Anglesea, formed a third line, extending on the left almost as far as Tella-Haye. In front of the right centre was the country house of a Flemish nobleman, called Hougoumont, which covered the return of that flank, and the greatest importance was attached to this position. On one side was a large farm-yard, and, on the other, a garden fenced by a high brick wall. Here the Guards were posted, with three hundred Nassau troops, and braver men never yet struggled to obey an order of keeping the position at any cost. During the battle repeated instructions were sent to hold it by forming the soldiers in any way which might oppose the enemy.

“ An advanced corps occupied the village

of Braine-le-Lend, while the Nivelles road was protected by the extreme right extending to Merke Braine. From the immediate left of our line, in front of Ter-la-Haye, a road led to Ohain, and the woody passes of Saint Lambert, by which a communication with the Prussians was maintained. The reserve, commanded by Lord Hill, occupied the front of the village of Merke Braine, with its right resting on Braine-le-Lend.

“Such was the position of the British Army on the memorable eighteenth of June; a day, comrade, which, while an English heart beats, can never be remembered but with pride worthy of its deeds.

“The French occupied a ridge opposite to our position, and the valley between waved with a tall and yellow crop of corn, nearly ready for the sickle; but not an ear was left for the husbandman. Blood-stained and

soddened with gore, the ground looked before sunset, more like a butcher's shambles than a harvest field. Between the two lines a space of little more than a thousand yards intervened, and although it varied in breadth, the greatest range between us and the enemy did not exceed twelve hundred. These were close quarters, comrade, and when the work began, told with fearful effect on both sides.

“After a wet and stormy night, the morning broke, finding but few of our eyes shut, I ween, and from where we were posted we could see the immense masses of the French, both cavalry and infantry, moving in every direction. Bonaparte had ordered all his columns from the rear, for an immediate attack, and the strongest occupied the two wings, and particularly the right.

“About eleven o'clock the battle began

in earnest, by Jerome's division advancing upon Hougomont. There had been some skirmishing during the morning; but I date the commencement from the attack on this post. The garrison did not number more than fifteen hundred men, against whom the enemy directed the whole second corps in successive attacks throughout the day. The light companies of the Coldstreams and third Guards were in the house and garden, and those of the first regiment in the wood to the left.

"The French covered their approach by a tremendous cross fire of artillery, which was well and quickly answered by our guns, and our men firing from loopholes bored in the garden wall, did immense execution, without suffering a corresponding loss. During the fight a French officer and some men got inside the gate of the farm-yard, and Colonel Macdonald, by sheer strength,

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closed it upon them, and joined hand to hand in cutting them down. Nothing could exceed the courage of the enemy, save that, perhaps, by which they were repulsed. In heaps they fell, and yet there was no hesitation to repeat the sallies, although they moved over hillocks of the dying and the dead.

“Finding it impossible to dislodge us in this way, shells were fired upon the post, and one striking a tower, set it in flames, and quickly spreading to other parts of the building, it soon became untenable, although the Guards remained in their entrenchment, while the fire raged fiercely above their heads. Whatever may have been said or written, Hougoumont was never taken nor abandoned throughout the day.

“This attack cost the French little short of ten thousand men, and, although our loss was small in comparison to theirs, two-thirds of our men fell.”

Corporal Crump again came to a check in his narrative, and seemed to derive considerable satisfaction from the deep sip which he took from his glass, and the knowledge of possessing a silent and interested listener.

“While this diversion was going on,” continued the old soldier, with a smack of his lips which sounded not unlike the explosion of a percussion cap, “a cannonade from more than two hundred pieces of artillery was being poured upon our whole line, intended to support their repeated charges of cavalry and infantry. They never let us alone; but sometimes with the infantry, and sometimes with both together, we were constantly employed with as much work as we well could manage, and now and then, perhaps, a little more.

“To receive these, we were drawn up in nearly solid squares, each being several

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files deep. Enough space was given between the squares to deploy into line when occasion required; while a third square in the rear of those that were parallel, presented a front to the enemy's cavalry, as often as they pushed beyond them, being thus exposed to a triple fire. In this order, with the artillery playing upon the French columns as they advanced, and the cavalry in reserve, ready to sweep forward when opportunities occurred, our men stood like solid walls. Throughout the whole of that fight the attack and defence were the same. They continued to rush upon our front, we to receive and beat them back. Again and again did we throw ourselves flat on the ground, to let the storm of shot rattle over us; then, with scarcely time to rise, formed into square to receive cavalry. Up they came, sometimes firing their pistols close to our faces, and then wheeling round,

would often go off, laughing, at a gentle trot. As soon as they were driven back, we deployed into line to await the approach of infantry; and these formed the principal, if not the whole manœuvres of the day.

“It was sorely trying to our men to await the charges of the enemy, hour after hour, each square standing on its appointed ground, and as the gaps were made in the front ranks, for others to step forward to supply their places, only to meet with the same fate. It was almost more than could be expected from any mortal troops; for it is one thing to rush for’ard cheering and shouting in a charge, and quite another to receive it in cold blood, with your comrades dropping round ye like hail. As an instance of what British soldiers can take, as well as give, I may mention that the twenty-seventh regiment, had four hundred

men and every officer, except one sub-
 vern, knocked over in square, neither
 moving an inch nor pulling a trigger—
 Many a chicken heart can be roused to do
 a bold act, but the true courage of a soldier
 shows itself in deeds such as these.

“Three great attacks—each of them a
 battle in itself—had now been made, when
 the advanced columns of the Prussians,
 emerging from the wood of Frischermont,
 must have proved anything but a refresh-
 ing sight to Bonaparte. In the hope,
 however, of turning the fortunes of the day
 before these could come up, fresh bodies
 of infantry and cavalry were advanced,
 under cover of a heavy cannonade, against
 our centre, and upon our right, while the
 left was only so much engaged as to pre-
 vent it from detaching reinforcements.
 This effort to force the British position
 was the fiercest yet made. For a moment

the cavalry were driven back, and the advanced artillery taken, but rallying again, they charged into the very centre of the enemy's columns, and cut several battalions to pieces.

"It was none o' your pull trigger, fire-away, now hit, now miss, kind of work, but close, hand-to-hand, man-to-man fighting, so as you might tell whether your enemy's breath was flavoured with garlic or parsley.

"For above an hour this struggle lasted, extending, as it did, along nearly the whole line; but after a slaughter of thousands, the enemy found it impossible to make any impression upon us, and again fell back. Evening was now coming on, and just as the French were repulsed in this, their fourth great attack, the operations of the Prussians began upon their right flank and rear.

"I need scarcely say with what joy we re-

ceived this well-timed reinforcement; for although, as the Duke has often declared, he never doubted for an instant the issue of the battle throughout the day, yet, depending upon this support, and its being delayed for hours beyond the time expected, he might well exclaim, as an aide-de-camp galloped up, and told him that a particular division was reduced to one-third, 'Would to God that night or Blucher were come!'

"The left wing of the Prussians advanced separately, and commenced a furious attack with six battalions, upon the village of Planchenoit, in the rear of the French. Here several bloody charges were made, but the post was maintained in spite of every exertion to take it.

"It was now a critical moment for Bonaparte, and he saw that but one more chance remained on the die. A fourth

column of attack was now formed, almost entirely composed of his Guard, and which he conducted in person. Upon reaching the middle of the slope, he ordered Ney to lead them on, and they were supported, as before, by heavy and well-served discharges of artillery.

“Our battalions of the Guards advanced in line nearly to the brow of the hill, and receiving orders to lie down and shelter themselves from the storm of shot, the Duke took his station behind them, to watch for the moment when they might spring up, and, in their turn, charge upon the enemy.

“The Imperial Guard—those fine old veterans whom all Europe acknowledged to be worthy of the title of Invincible—marched towards the ridge without a waver or a flinch, although whole files were knocked over from a galling fire from our

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right, the guns being served with wonderful precision. Nothing, however, stopped, or even checked their advance. On they came, and just as their heads tipped above the summit of the hill, that order was given, which still warms many an old soldier's breast—'Up, Guards, and at 'em again!'

"Then such a volley was poured into their ranks, into their very faces—with our muzzles almost crossing—which made them stagger again. And then, moved as one man, our brave fellows rushed for'ard at the point o' the bayonet, with a hurrah which seemed to quail the enemy; and, without waiting to receive the charge, they turned and runned away. Ay, comrade," said Corporal Crump, bringing the palm of his dexter hand violently upon the mahogany table, to the imminent risk of the glass and spoon, which jumped, jingled, and reeled

upon its surface, "they turned and runned away!"

The little general shopkeeper repeated the words to himself in a whisper, and, after a moment's cogitation, came to the conclusion that he should have acted in a corresponding manner, under corresponding circumstances.

"In less than a brace of minutes," resumed the corporal, "three hundred had fallen; while the Duke, leading up the forty-second and ninety-fifth, took them in flank. This attack was made with what was called the Middle Guard, and the track of the flying column might be seen by the dying and the dead. Marshal Ney's horse was soon shot under him, but sword in hand, he tried to rally the panic-stricken troops, and rushed into the thickest of the fight. All he could do, however, was useless. The advanced corps, falling back in

disorder upon the Old Guard, who were in reserve at the bottom of the slope, the whole became in confusion, and each began to think of escape in preference to duty, order, and discipline.

“An opportunity now offered for our cavalry to act, and for’ard they swept into the midst of the French ranks, giving them as liberal allowance of cold steel, as willing hands and trusty sabres could inflict. Some battalions of the Old Guard formed themselves into squares, and endeavoured to cover the retreat, but they were soon broken and cut to pieces by the cavalry, or hurried along with the rest. No quarter was either asked or given, and although the artillery had ceased firing, on account of the likelihood of doing as much mischief to our own men as those of the enemy, yet the slaughter was no less great from the sabre and bayonet.

“Bonaparte saw that with the repulse of the Imperial Guard his last hope was gone—the right wing of his army was broken in three places, while the greatest confusion prevailed in the rear—and that, in short, the day was lost. Fearing that Blucher would place his army in force upon the high road to Genappe, he hallooed out, ‘We must save ourselves!’ and setting spurs to his horse, led the way at a pace far from slow.

“The Duke, seeing the confusion in which the enemy was thrown, not only in the front by our charge, but also in the rear by the Prussians, suddenly shut up his telescope, and exclaimed, ‘Now, every man must advance.’”

“The order was no sooner given than executed. The whole line forming four deep, supported by the cavalry and infantry, led by the Duke, who placed him-

self at the head of the Foot Guards, advanced upon the confused forces of the French. The regiments on our flanks formed into squares, and accompanied the line down the slope, to protect it from cavalry, while at this moment the rays of the setting sun gleamed from behind a bank of clouds, as if to gild our triumph and our victory.

“At every point the charge was successful. The whole French army, panic-struck, hurried away in whatever direction seemed most likely to offer escape, while our men cut them down like grass before a scythe. The carnage was terrific; and as column after column, cavalry, infantry, and artillery, rolled furiously onwards, a sea of bodies was left in their rear.

“The Prussians in particular gave rein to their hatred, and being fresh on the field, the slaughter they committed was

fearful. The pursuit continued as far as Genappe, where the Duke and Blucher met for the first time on that eventful day. Most people say and think that the place of their meeting was La Belle Alliance ; but take the word of an old soldier, comrade, who was not far off, that it was Genappe, and no other. Here they decided that the Prussians should continue the pursuit alone, and considering that we had had a tolerable innings in a clear twelve hours' fight, it was not, perhaps, more than fell to their share. Right well, however, did they perform the duty. Not a moment's repose was allowed the enemy, and during the night, they were successively driven from nine bivouacs. In a few villages they tried to maintain themselves ; but the sound of the trumpet and drum renewed their panic, and away they went like sheep before a pack of wolves.

"There must be an end to all things," observed the corporal, draining the last drop from his glass, by way, perhaps, of illustrating his argument, "and such was the end of the battle of Waterloo."

"Tell me," said Jacob Giles, who appeared as full of excitement as a parched pea upon a drum-head, "tell me, Corporal," and he rubbed the tips of his fingers briskly as he spoke, "whether you're sure of having slayed a Frenchman with your own hands."

"As certain as my name's Crump," rejoined the veteran, "and these," continued he, stretching out a pair of as hard, bony, uncompromising-looking hands as eyes ever beheld, "are the identical bunches of fives that did the trick."

"Let me hear all about it, Corporal," returned Jacob, regarding his companion's broad palms, as they were held up for his especial notice, with a feeling akin to awe.

"It makes my flesh creep; but still I derive a kind of painful pleasure in listening to horrors, accidents, and offences. I invariably," continued he, "pick 'em out as tit-bits from the newspapers."

"Well, comrade!" ejaculated the old soldier, "it doesn't sound musical to chant one's own praise; but as what I'm going to tell ye takes us into Brussels, where we ought to have been (for aught I know) without fighting the battle of Waterloo over again, I'll let you into the secret of the way in which I grabbed an eagle."

"An eagle!" ejaculated the little general shopkeeper, elevating his brow and dropping his lower jaw. "An eagle, Corporal!"

"Ay," returned his companion, "that was the bird. Talking, though, is dry work," and with this prefatory remark, he pointed to the exhausted goblet, as a strong hint for its prompt replenishment.

Jacob, knowing full well what the corporal's taste was, poured a large preponderating quantity of brandy to that of water into the glass.

"You guess the right measure exactly, comrade," said the corporal, smiling. "By dad, Sir!" continued he, "it isn't everybody who can mix my liquor to my liking," and then with a loud, strong clearing of his voice, he again settled himself in his chair to take up the thread of his narrative.

"It was during the last charge, when we were mixed up with the enemy and driving them before us in flying and broken masses, that I caught sight of a French ensign, making off with the staff and colours of his regiment. I went at him, comrade, with a will, depend on't; but as I made my thrust at him, he turned, and, parrying it with his sword, cut at my head, leaving this pretty scar as an addition to

my beauty," and as he spoke, Corporal Crump slowly traced the scar with a forefinger across his countenance.

"As one good turn deserves another," said he, "I bayoneted him now from the chin upwards, which went through his jaws, and seemed to stagger him considerably. At this moment a lancer tried to give me a taste, but missing his mark, I managed to give him a parting salute by sending a ball between his shoulders, and he dropped his lance as if at that moment it became too hot to hold. Again I closed with the ensign, who looked a terrible object as the blood gushed from his mouth and throat, and failing to turn a thrust which I made at his middle, I ran him through and dropped him without a groan. Clutching the staff from his dead, vice-like gripe, I saw to my joy that it was surmounted by an eagle—a rare prize, and to the honour of the French

be it spoken, one which was seldom allowed to fall into the hands of an enemy.

“No sooner was my trophy known to our General, than I received orders to bear it to the rear, and many a cheer greeted my march, as I waved the blood-stained colours above my head, on my road back to Brussels.

“We have now,” said Corporal Crum, “arrived by a wide circle to where our story ought to have begun.”

CHAPTER IX.

"I HAD no sooner arrived in Brussels," said the corporal—"and a pretty stir the city was in, from the news of the great victory—than I went straight to the old quarters of Lieutenant Somerset; for although I had often thought both of him and his young wife since the muster on the morning of our march to Quatre Bras, I had neither seen nor heard of him. This, however, caused me little wonder, as many officers could not join their regiments before the march commenced, and were unable to

find them afterwards. It has been said," **Ed,**
 continued Corporal Crump, in a confidential **Edia**
 tone, "that a few were absent without any **any**
 such excuse, and the Duke was furnished **beed**
 with a list of 'em; but after reading it, and **band**
 jotting their names down in his memory **try**
 with the intention, doubtless, of promoting **ag**
 them at the first fitting opportunity, he tore **tre**
 the paper into remarkably small pieces and **band**
 said, 'There can be no cowards in the **ne**
 British Army. Those who were absent **ant**
 from their duty require all the condolence **eece**
 which their friends can give them, and I'll **ll**
 not suppose one capable of being so, had it **it**
 been possible for him to be present.'

"It was a noble way of treating the **se**
 white-feathered file: but our tongues don't **z**
 always express our thoughts, comrade.

"As I knocked at the door of the house,
 a sort of echo came from it which sounded
 to my ears that all was not right within. I

don't know how it is, but I've heard many another old woman say, besides myself, that sorrow sends clouds before to prepare us for its coming.

"Having rapped several times, and getting no answer to the summons, I walked in to search for intelligence, and by the dull glimmer of a lamp through the door of an apartment left ajar, I saw Lieutenant Somerset writing as fast as his pen would drive on a table before him.

" 'Thank God!' exclaimed I, kicking open the door with less ceremony, perhaps, than became a private when addressing his superior officer. 'Thank God, Sir, that you're safe!'

" 'Safe!' he repeated, almost in a scream, as he started from his seat, and fixed his eyes, glaring like a maniac's, upon me. 'Who says I'm safe?'

" 'Why, Lieutenant Somerset,' rejoined

I, 'don't you know your old servant Crump?'

" 'Yes, yes,' he returned, hurriedly 'well, very well.'

" 'Then speak to me, Sir,' said I, 'as you used to speak. Are you ill or wounded?'

" 'Wounded!' he hissed between his clenched teeth, and clasping his hands together, he wrung them till the very joint snapped. 'No, no, I am not wounded. Ha ha, ha! I'm safe, quite safe. You say so don't ye? Ha, ha, ha! All know I'm safe. There's not a drummer-boy in the service but will tell you so within a week,' and then he muttered an oath too strong even for me to repeat, although I've spit out my venom in that form before now, comrade, pretty round and stiff.

" Seeing that some great screw was loose and that his state bordered on positive madness, I felt almost afraid to press him

further, but he soon relieved me of the difficulty.

“ ‘What have you there?’ said he, fiercely, pointing to the staff and colors, ‘and how did you get that blood on your face?’

“ ‘This, Sir,’ answered I, holding them at arm’s length, so as to display them the better, ‘is an eagle which I took myself in a hand-to-hand fight from a French officer, and the blood’s from a sabre cut which he gave me in return.’

“ ‘Now God help me!’ he cried, in the wild tone of one goaded by despair and misery. ‘And where think you I was the while?’

‘Where you’ve ever been, Sir,’ returned I, ‘when duty called, at your post, if not with your corps.’

“ ‘*Here!*’ hallooed he, stamping on the floor, ‘here, I tell you here. I didn’t join, Crump. What say ye to that? Ha, ha, ha!

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His words caused a dizziness to come over me; and not being particularly fresh from the effects of my wound, hard work and short rations, I dropped upon a chair sick as a baby.

“ ‘How, Sir,’ said I, as well as I could speak, ‘did that happen?’ ”

“With a control which he seemed suddenly to possess over himself, he drew a seat close to mine, and in a quiet manner and voice that was only broken now and then with kind of gasp, he replied, ‘They’ll try me before court-martial, I suppose, and that which I am now about telling you will be told to them. I’ve no defence to offer, no justification to make. The truth is an admission of my guilt.’ ”

“He here appeared choked; but after the lapse of a few seconds, recovered his composure, and then proceeded.

“ ‘On the night that the signal was given

for us to muster, I was in bed with my wife, who, as you may know, was in the condition of an expectant mother. The roll of the drums woke me; but for a short time I could scarcely believe that the sounds were other than the effects of a dream; but the assembling of the troops and the increasing noise and confusion, quickly convinced me of the reality of what I heard.

“‘A soldier’s wife knows the meaning of the sounds of fife, drum, and trumpet as well as himself, and mine, starting from her sleep, exclaimed, “That’s the muster roll! What can it mean?”

“‘Intelligence of the enemy’s approach,’ replied I, ‘if I may guess the cause.’

“‘But you’ll not leave me now,’ she rejoined, trembling with fear, ‘not yet; pray do not leave me yet.’”

“‘Not leave you!’ I returned, as I

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hurried on my uniform. ‘And you a soldier’s wife!’

“‘Yes, yes,’ she added, ‘I know that I know all; but’—and here, bursting into tears, she twined her arms around my neck with a look so piteous, that I felt it weaken and unman me.

“‘Tell me,’ I rejoined, ‘all you would say. The cause of our separation is irremediable, and the call peremptory; but this was long anticipated by both, and you promised, when the hour arrived, not to add to our pain by fruitless tears and supplications.’

“‘Oh, do not blame me!’ she exclaimed in a fresh agony of grief. ‘You little know what I now suffer. You could not chide me if you did!’

“‘Perceiving large beads of perspiration standing upon her forehead, and that she shook like one stricken with the palsy I

every limb, the dreadful truth at once flashed upon my brain that she was then in the first throes of travail.

“‘Forgive me if I can scarcely say what I did. I remember, or think I do, rushing wildly into the streets, and finding them blocked up with troops, artillery-waggon, and crowds of citizens. In every quarter I sought assistance; but in vain. Wives were parting from their husbands, children from their parents, friends from friends, and one and all so occupied with themselves, that none would listen to me. It might be that I was scarcely understood, for my senses seemed gone, and I returned to the chamber of my wife to find her alone and helpless in her trouble.

“‘ Loud, and louder yet the drums beat, and the bugles sounded to arms; but there was one sword which remained in its scabbard—and that sword was mine.

“ ‘Do not leave me yet; pray not yet,’ was the oft-repeated petition, which kept me spell-bound to the spot.

“ ‘There was no turning from it, and there I remained, hour after hour, to watch the sufferer, and alleviate her pains.

“ ‘What was I to do?’ said the wretched man, clasping his brow with violence. ‘I could not leave her, as I thought, to die. He must be something more or less than man who could. Perhaps *I* was less; but with her, whom I swore, before my God, to honour and protect, I remained to my honour’s cost and worldly ruin.

“ ‘Hours passed, and the spirit, fluttering on the threshold of life, was still delayed, until the mother seemed sinking from the effort to give it birth.

“ ‘Aid was at length obtained; but the opinion of the attendant led me to believe that I was probably witnessing the ebbing

of a life more precious to me than all the world besides.

“‘Little—and but little more, perhaps, is necessary for me to say. After enduring the greatest danger, it was passed in safety; but too late for me to retrieve the momentous opportunity which had been lost. Maddened as I am at *that* thought, and knowing full well my misery will be scoffed at, and made the subject of licentious ridicule, I still,’ continued he, weeping as I never saw a strong man weep before, ‘would act again as I then did, at the peril of my eternal soul.’

“Some griefs like some wounds,” said Corporal Crump, allaying a slight feeling of dust in his throat, by a seasonable appeal to his glass, “are too deep for speedy healing, and the best plan, in such cases, is to give ‘em time, and let ‘em alone. Seeing that I could do no good just then, and that my

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poor master was quite beyond all balm of comfort that *I* could render, I thought it wiser to let him be by himself a bit, and stealing quietly out of the room, I left, on the night of the day on which the battle of Waterloo was won, as good and brave a soldier as ever drew a sword, broken-hearted that he was not there.

CHAPTER X.

"I'm spinning a long yarn, comrade," said Corporal Crump. "You'll begin to grow weary of an old soldier's gabble, I fear."

"No, no," replied Jacob, administering an unusual supply of friction to the ends of his fingers; "that's impossible. I can listen," continued he, "for ever, and, if required, considerably longer."

"Well!" rejoined his companion, "in that case I'll proceed with my story, and arrive by easy marches to the end."

“In consequence of little attention being paid to my wound for several hours after receiving it, inflammation set in, and I was pronounced unable to join the forces which put an extinguisher upon Bonaparte’s power by their prompt occupation of Paris.

“Glad of the opportunity of remaining with my poor master, who gradually sank into a dull, lifeless kind of state, from which there was no rousing him, I did my best in watching him both night and day, and easing, as far as I was able, the load of care from his sorrowful wife and young mother of his child.

“It was a hard duty; and finding I could make but little way, I thought of the chaplain’s words, and prayed, in a rough kind of manner I fear, to Him who, we’re told, is as ready to hearken to the private’s petition as He is to the general’s.

“We don’t, d’ye see, comrade, always

~~u~~nderstand what's best for us; and we often ~~w~~ant, like whining children, that which ~~w~~ould exactly turn out to be the worst. **T**he end of our plans and schemes often **p**roves this to be the case; and it is not for **u**s to think that because we are denied the **t**hings we crave, mercy is not at the root of **t**he denial. However I'm not A 1 at a **s**ermon, and so here goes for another spell **a**t the facts.

"I prayed, you must know, as a man should when he prays at all—in earnest, that the lieutenant might be comforted and restored to peace of mind and contentment of heart. I asked too that he might keep his rank in this world, and be found among the most worthy in that to come. His wife and child were not forgotten; and I wound up with a strong hope that all three might live long and happy lives, and that I might be a fourth in the ring.

“ I didn’t forget myself, comrade,” said the corporal, tapping himself significantly on the breast. “ A man’s a fool, Sir, who forgets himself under the most pressing circumstances, and as I’ve said before, the Crumps are the original blades spoken of in history as sharp, keen-set razors.

“ I can’t say,” continued he, “ that there was as favourable an answer as could be desired ; for my master grew daily worse, and at last became little short of a confirmed idiot. Listless of all that passed around him, the day came and the day went without any apparent impression being made upon his mind, although occasionally he imagined himself on his trial, and would go through the whole story with little variation than as he told it to me.

“ It was a situation of difficulty, as a friend of mine observed when pinioned to be hanged, and I felt myself sorely puzzled

what to do for the best. The exchequer, never at the best of times too well furnished, became extremely low, and it was as much as I could do to forage for our daily rations. But what with my pay—a whole shilling a day,” chuckled the corporal, “barring deductions—putting myself on short allowance of tobacco and grog, and making prizes of a few odds and ends which people didn’t miss, and consequently couldn’t want, I managed to keep a particularly lean and hungry animal from the door, which otherwise might have paid us a most unwelcome and speedy visit.

“Matters went on in this way for the best part of three months, when a letter with a large official seal upon it, and directed to Lieutenant Somerset, was delivered into my hands; and thinking it the wiser plan to make myself acquainted with its contents before anybody else possessed the same advantage, I snapped the wax, and

thanked the planet under which I'd been born, that I went oftener to the Sunday-school than to play pitch and toss on the green.

"It was merely a formal admission from head-quarters of the receipt of the resignation of the lieutenant's commission. No word alluded to his conduct, and whether an explanation accompanied it, or not, at the time of his sending it in, was never known from that day to this.

"It was now clear to my mind that no further notice would be taken either of him or the offence of which he had been guilty. Indeed, his situation was such that nothing could have been done by the way of punishment, as the depth of misery to which he had sunk possessed no lower.

"After considering well what steps had better be taken, Mrs. Somerset determined upon returning to England; and although it's not a rule of mine to study the interests of

others in preference to my own, I made up my mind to go with her, provided I could get my discharge. The war being at an end, there was not much difficulty in obtaining this, and with a pension of ten-pence a-day, the rank of a full corporal, and, I believe, the character of a good soldier, I quitted his most gracious Majesty's service"—Corporal Crump brought his right hand, with a squared elbow, stiffly to his forehead, and saluted the King—"to defend and protect, instead of my country, a poor broken-down man in body and mind, a little fat ball of a female squeaker, who looked first cousin to an angel, and a good dear lady, not—" the corporal dropped his voice to a scarcely audible whisper—"much better qualified to struggle with the world than the aforesaid sucking baby at her bosom.

"For home, or as I should say to seek

one, we sailed, and, after squatting down at one place and then at another—places which the poor lieutenant knew when he was a boy—in the hope that visiting them might work a change for the better, we at last settled in a little quiet sea-side nook in the west of England.

“Now and then, but somewhat few and far between, letters containing money in small sums arrived for my mistress. Where, however, they came from, or by whom they were sent, I was not informed, and what may appear stranger to you, comrade, I never tried to find out.”

Jacob Giles made the silent admission within himself, that the latter part of the corporal's statement far exceeded the former in the production of astonishment, and he mentally acknowledged, that, had he been similarly situated, he should have exercised his best powers to have made the

discovery with the least possible lapse or loss of time.

“The cottage which we occupied was a snug little box within a few yards of the shore,” resumed Corporal Crump, “and either in wandering along the sands, or watching his little child play with the pebbles on the beach, the poor lieutenant’s harmless life glided on with scarcely a change from one twelvemonth’s end to another. He made no inquiries, rarely spoke; but would sit for hours, with his blinkless eyes fixed on vacancy and dwelling upon one thought, the maddening misery of his brain. And so days were added to days, and, at length, years to years.”

“Changes, however, slowly as they may work, are ever going on. Many of us, and I may say *most* of us, comrade,” said the corporal, emphatically, “are apt to hug ourselves with the notion, that what has lasted for

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long will still last on. But life, and belonging to it, is like a wound-up clock which, when set a-going, is continually running down.

“One day I noticed that the lieutenant looked paler than usual, and his limbs trembled under him as he walked. The following morning he roused us all at sunrise, and begged that the curtains from the chamber windows might be withdrawn, and that the casement might be opened.

“‘Let me,’ said he, ‘once more see the glorious giver of life, and feel the fresh breezes of heaven play upon my brow. My head does not ache now, Clara,’ continued he, speaking to his wife, ‘but,’ and he shook his head mournfully, ‘how it has throbbed for years, long years! I know all that has passed,’ and as he spoke, he clasped his hands together, ‘a dream too frightful and alas! too real. The hand of affliction has

been heavy upon me and upon mine; but the hour is near when our troubled hearts shall be at rest.'

"He then asked for his little child, and taking her in his arms he looked earnestly in her face, and prayed God to bless her."

"I think I see him now, comrade," said the corporal, hastily brushing something from his cheek, "folding her to his breast and kissing her as I'd seldom seen him do before."

"That which he said to me is not worth repeating, only that it's as well to observe that I didn't deserve one fourth part to what his grateful soul gave vent."

"By his wish I now led little Clara from the room, and the few remaining moments of his life were witnessed by her alone whose broken spirit will be healed only when they are united again in heaven."

Corporal Crump's voice faltered with the

conclusion of the sentence; but its steadiness of tone recovered under the influence of a timely appeal to Jacob's mixture.

"We remained at the cottage for some time after the lieutenant's death," continued he, "and it seemed a melancholy pleasure with my mistress to go almost daily to her husband's grave, in a small, out-o'-the-way churchyard close by, and plant it with garden flowers. Poor thing! I'm afraid she often watered them with her tears.

"Soon after this event, letters arrived for Mrs. Somerset, which seemed in no way to lighten her grief, and, I fear, added new weight to her purse.

"It was a struggle not to look hungry now and then, for some of us, I assure ye but we did our best to hold up our heads and put the most smiling face in our power upon porridge, brown bread, potatoes, and

salt. Hard lines though for a lady born, comrade! Worse than a few score with the cat to a back that's used to 'em.

"There's but one more circumstance I've got to mention to bring my story down to the present time," said the corporal. "An old soldier obeys orders without asking for whys and wherefores," continued he, "and upon Mrs. Somerset desiring me to pack up our kit, and follow her the day after her starting for these parts, I didn't ask the reason for the march. There was none offered and none given, and the rest you know as well as myself. Here we are in good quarters, and it's to be looked upon as a miracle that we found them. Comrade, your health."

CHAPTER XI.

THE room assigned for Leonard Woodbee's study was oak-panelled, dark, and gloomy as an anchorite's cell. If a ray of the sun managed to slant itself through the narrow casement, placed like a loophole in the massive walls, it was always of the most sickly hue. Not a fly ever buzzed there, and the jack-o'-lanterns, reflected from a dull and slimy fish-pond beneath, danced upon the ceiling like so many gibbering and pale-faced spectres. A wide hearth yawned at one end of the apart-

ment, but a long time had elapsed since faggot or yule log blazed upon it; and the wind moaned and sighed in the huge chimney, as if caged against its will, and eager to escape.

The young student sat alone, with a volume resting upon his knees, and, although his looks were fixed upon an open page, he seemed to be making but slow progress in accomplishing the task allotted to him. In an attitude which proclaimed mental exhaustion, he reclined on his chair, and, with pale cheeks and heavy eyelids, read the Greek alphabet over and over again; but when he attempted to repeat it from memory, he invariably failed, and had to have recourse to the book. It was weary work, and the boy ran his fingers through his luxuriant curls, and brushing them from his forehead, sighed as if his young heart was sad indeed.

At this moment a light footfall fell on his ear, and before he could turn round to learn from whom it came, an arm fondly encircled his neck, and his head was pressed upon his mother's bosom.

"Tell me, Leonard," she said, in a soft clear voice, and printing a kiss upon his brow, "have you learned your lessons?"

"Not one," replied the child, almost startling her with the energy of his manner; "I've not learned one, mother."

"But you'll try to do so, dear?" rejoined she.

"Try!" he repeated, "I'm always trying; but it's no use," continued the child, shaking his head, "I shall never learn Greek."

"With patience and time you will," returned his mother. "All find difficulties at first."

"O mother," ejaculated the boy, burst-

ing into a passionate flood of tears, and throwing himself into her arms, "why am I tortured so? Sleeping or waking this dreadful book," and he held up the volume to her gaze, "is always before me. I dream of nothing else, and even when I try to play, it often seems to dance before my eyes, and I can play no more."

"Hush, hush!" added she, clasping him more closely to her bosom. "Speak not so, dear one. Come, come, take courage, and in a little while you'll conquer all these fears."

"Do you think so, mother?" said he, looking inquiringly into her face.

"I hope so, Leonard," she returned; for had she spoken as her thoughts dictated, her answer must have been at variance with her hopes.

"I was so happy" sobbed the boy, "with Miss Baxter. I never knew then that there had been any Greeks."

“But it’s necessary that a man should be clever,” expostulated Mrs. Woodbee; “and your future happiness—at least, so your father and Doctor Starkie say—depends upon your becoming learned and great.”

“But do you say so, too, mother?” asked the child.

“It really could not be of the slightest consequence, dear boy,” she replied, with an ineffectual attempt to suppress a sigh, “whatever I might say upon the subject. For your own sake, and mine, Leonard, you must endeavour to apply your mind to your studies, and when concluded, each day we will wander through the fields together, and gather flowers as we used to do, and I’ll tell those old stories which you love so well, until you grow as tired of them as you now are of your Greek grammar.”

“I should never get tired with listening to them,” responded he, “never!”

Approaching footsteps were now heard tramping slowly and heavily along the corridor, which connected that lonely room with the less desolate parts of the house, and as they came near and nearer still, the colour went and flushed in the boy's face, as if the beating of his heart became suddenly more irregular than its wont. A violent trembling also seized his limbs, and his eyes turned instinctively to his mother's face, with a plaintive expression mingled with alarm.

"'Tis merely Doctor Starkie, Leonard," observed his mother, drawing slightly from him; "you're not frightened of him?"

"Yes, I am," he rejoined, "very much frightened. And if he frowned upon you, and spoke as sharply as he often does to me, you'd be frightened too."

The sentence was scarcely concluded, when Doctor Starkie, the Oxford double-

first prize-man, presented himself at the door, and perceiving the presence of Mrs. Woodbee, gently raised the palms of his hands, and bringing them together as noiselessly as a purring cat rubs her paws, expressed a silent, but lively pleasure at the sight which met his view.

The doctor appeared just turned on the shady side of forty, possessing a lean, straight figure, invariably decked in a sable costume, and looking like a large stick of black sealing-wax, or an undertaker of strictly abstemious habits. His coat was single-breasted, cut with a sharp angular collar, and a black silk waistcoat, buttoned closely to the throat, looked a tight, rigid, and uncomfortable garment. Round his throat was a narrow, white cravat, stiffly starched, and his lank, long jaws were cleanly shaved, and as smooth as the back of a lady's hand. A wide, lipless mouth

stretched across his face, and from a habit which he possessed, of drawing the corners back, it formed a sort of large parenthesis. A long, sharp nose, tapering downwards to a point, had a decided tendency to meet a slightly turned-up chin ; while a pair of little bright, black eyes, set behind two projecting cheek-bones, glistened like an angry ferret's. So these far from favourable points in the "human face divine," according, at least, to the received and standard rules of physiognomy, Doctor Starkie possessed a brow which gave the observer an impression that the double-first prizes had not been awarded to a man devoid of brains. It was not lofty, but there was a width and squareness in its formation, leaving little doubt of the capacity and nature of the soil in which a most extensive crop of classics had been drilled, ripened and harvested with care. Oh ! but the doctor could quote

glibly from every Latin and Greek author, whose respective books, it would appear, are purposely designed for the agency of birching little boys, and the "plucking" of larger ones. He had them all at his fingers' ends, and could rattle them off, without more trouble to himself than blowing peas through a pea-shooter. A great scholar was Dr. Starkie! The world conceded to him the full right and title to this honour, and awarded a liberal meed of praise to the walking lexicon. It would have been as well, perhaps, had there been equal reason for assigning corresponding merit to his goodness.

"I'm afraid, Doctor Starkie," said Mrs. Woodbee, as he came, bowing, forward, "that I must be considered an interloper here. Indeed, it was my husband's express desire that I should not interrupt your pupil by visiting him in his hours of study; but"—

"Make no apology, I beg, my dear Madam," interrupted the tutor, in a smooth oily voice, as he drew the corners of his mouth back, until they were in close proximity to his ears. "The solicitude of the mother," continued he, blandly, "is one of the purest, and, I might add, holiest—" the doctor, as he uttered this word, turned his eyes gravely upwards—"of nature's spontaneous dictates."

"I was about to add," rejoined Mrs. Woodbee, without noticing the high-flown eulogy to her parental feelings, "that I thought Leonard looked paler than usual, and required more freedom, and that if *you* were of the same opinion, there would be little difficulty in obtaining my husband's consent to give him increased relaxation."

"You flatter me," returned the doctor, bending with an obsequious, cringing air,

“in supposing that I possess such influence with one whom I am proud to call my friend and patron. Apollo’s bow, however, was not always bent, and if it will afford you, my dear Madam, the smallest gratification that our young aspirant to fame here,” and he placed a hand gently, and almost affectionately, upon Leonard’s shoulders, “should not be so strict a proselyte of Minerva, we will obtain an indulgence, and free him from a part of the most irksome of his labours.”

“I feel greatly indebted for your ready compliance with my wish,” added Mrs. Woodbee, “and I trust,” continued she, turning to her son, “that you, Leonard, will appreciate Doctor Starkie’s kindness, by diligently applying, at those times appointed for your studies.”

“I’ll try,” said the child, lifting his heavy eyelids, and fixing a look approach-

ing to despair, upon his mother. "I'm always trying."

With a kiss of encouragement, his mother now left him in the dreaded society of the doctor, who, in his imagination, was quite as much to be feared as one of those terrible ogres spoken of by Miss Baxter.

Nothing could possibly be more abrupt than the variation of tone which the doctor assumed upon the departure of Mrs. Woodbee. To the moment of closing the door upon her, which he did with so gentle a manner that neither hinge, lock, nor bolt jarred upon the ear, he was all bows, smiles, and acquiescence. In his tread, too, across the room, it seemed as if the soles of his shoes were bound with list, so stealthily and noiselessly was his gait. But after listening for a few seconds for the purpose, it would appear, to assure himself that no likelihood existed of anything he

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might now say or do being overheard
marvellous change took place in
external demeanour of Doctor Starkie.

“ Well, Sir,” cried he, with a sharpness
tone and gesture, which had the effect
making little Leonard skip from his seat
as if some pointed instrument had suddenly
been thrust under it, “ can you now
distinguish the difference between Alpha
Omega, Delta and Epsilon? ”

“ I’ll try, Sir,” replied the pupil, with
nervous gasp, sounding exceedingly
a hiccough. “ I’ll—I’ll—I’ll try, ”
repeated he.

“ Thank you,” rejoined his tutor, with
affected obligation, as he threw himself
back with dignity in his chair, and fixed
his eyes upon the trembling child. “ I
exceedingly indebted for the promised effort
and might have entertained still greater
satisfaction had it been exercised on

successfully at an earlier period. We have made little progress, young Sir," continued he, with a frown, which brought the ogres most forcibly to Leonard's mind, "and it is indispensable for our respective positions, that more speed should be accomplished, without the delay of an hour; ay," continued he, as if weighing the brief period which he had named, "without the delay even of an hour."

"I'll try, Sir," returned the child—it was the only answer he felt capable of giving. "I'll try, Sir."

"And I'll take care that your best energies are awakened in the trial," rejoined the doctor, with a nod which carried with it an undefined threat. "I am led to agree with your excellent father," continued he, "whom I have consulted on the subject during my temporary absence from this room, that the latent mental powers of which you are

doubtlessly in possession, lie dormant, and require the application of strong means to rouse them to action. I myself, young Si, have witnessed many instances of this kind, and although equally unpleasant as it may prove to both of us, to have recourse to them, I cannot allow my system of instruction to be called into question. My character, to a certain degree, is at stake and—" Doctor Starkie dropped his voice as if the concluding portion of the sentence was intended only for himself, "probate my interests."

Leonard listened with the profound attention to each word as it fell from the tutor's lips; but like the Greek, the greater portion of what was said reached far beyond the limits of his comprehension. The doctor looked a greater ogre than ever!

"If I may judge," continued he, "the vacancy of the stare with which you

are favouring me, the meaning I wish to convey is not clearly understood."

"No," replied the boy, shaking his head, "I don't know what you mean. You told mamma that I should have more play and less study; but I don't think you mean that now."

"In that particular, young Sir," rejoined the doctor, "you understand me to the letter; and yet you will find it to your advantage," and he spoke slowly, so that each word might fall with effect, "not to appear discontented or adverse to the discipline observed for your improvement. Mammams are not the best judges for over-indulged children, and the most desirable plan for avoiding their importunities is to yield to their arguments without granting their wishes. It may be called Jesuitical, and I believe is so, but an immense amount of trouble is saved by the proceeding.

Now," continued Doctor Starkie, "that there may be no error or misconception on your part, my dear young friend, I shall conclude what I am going to say in very plain language. I do not choose, and, moreover, positively forbid your complaining to your amiable mamma or to others, either directly or indirectly, of my treatment towards you in my capacity of your preceptor. My authority must be absolute, and there must be no interference; but to avoid unnecessary trouble and vexation, I require you to assume, whatever your feelings may be, an entire satisfaction with it. I can allow of no lamentations or expressions of discontent, as they would prove embarrassing to me, and be productive of a baneful influence upon my ease and comfort, which I hope to enjoy during my sojourn in this establishment. You will observe, young Sir, if you are in pos-

session of the most finite powers of observation, that no one can be more frank," and as he spoke he stretched the angles of his mouth back, "than I am with you."

Leonard looked at his tutor for minutes without a blink, and felt persuaded that one of those early mundane monsters, who swallowed helpless children by the bushel in subterranean caves, now sat before him.

"I shall not say more on the subject this morning," observed the doctor, considerately; "but take my word for it, my dear young friend, unless you pay more than ordinary regard to my directions for the future, I shall adopt a plan which can scarcely fail to draw your attention to them," and then his eyes glistened, as Leonard thought, more brightly than ever, and reminiscences of gigantic cannibals of old presented themselves to his view more vividly, if possible, than before.

CHAPTER XII.

WHO is he that never rests, whose
began with the beginning, to whom
can be no termination, no lapse, no
Who is he to whom ages past are
units in his ceaseless course, the
nations but as atoms in his balance
is he that scatters man's noblest works
crumbles them into dust, as if they
never been? Who is he that sweeps
bloom and beauty from childhood
face, to make room for the
cheek of passion, sorrow, mis-

sin? Let the glory of empires passed away, the moss-grown ruin, and the old, tottering on the verge of eternity, reply: "It is TIME, and, in us, you see what must be the end of all things pertaining to mortality."

In a few weeks there was an end even to the curiosity excited in the minds of the inhabitants of Grundy's Green and its vicinity, relative to the arrival of the general shopkeeper's visitors; or, as they were now called, his "lodgers." It was universally received as an axiom, that Mrs. Somerset was the widow of an officer, with slender means; that Miss Clara was a pretty, gentle child, and the Belle of the Village; and that Corporal Crump, although occasionally given to be dictatorial in expressing his sentiments in the bar-parlour of the Harrow and Pitchfork, was acknowledged, with one consent, "fit company for a lord."

With the drawback before mentioned, no one could be more popular in the neighbourhood than the old soldier, and in the front rank of his admirers might be classed Mistress Twigg, the buxom hostess of that far-famed hostelrie.

It began to be whispered, indeed—so rife was the locality with reports, sayings, and doings—that the corporal already entertained a feeling of compassion for Mistress Twigg's lonely condition. If, however, the smallest foundation existed for this statement, the superstructure shall not be raised till a more fitting opportunity presents itself.

It may have been stated before, but it will bear repetition, that the bar-parlour of the Harrow and Pitchfork was one of those cozy and caressing nooks, which, when the little fire burned brightly to throw a lustrous light around, and the wind howled and roared in the chimney-pot, and

rattled the winter sleet and rain against the panes of the bow-window, snugly screened by scarlet curtains, and whistled through keyholes, chinks, and crevices, and swung the old crazy sign-board, outside, to and fro with a harsh creaking sound—then it may be alleged, without fear of contradiction, that the bar-parlour of the Harrow and Pitchfork was one of those cozy and caressing nooks, of which, when a man found himself once in possession, he would not be likely to relinquish in a hurry, or without duly weighing the probable chances of making a change considerably for the worst.

The night—to use a metaphor of Ned, the ostler—was as dark as pitch, and a sharp, gusty wind drove a shower of mingled rain and sleet into the face of an exceedingly corpulent wayfarer, muffled to the eyes in a large shawl, and encased in a heavy, long

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drab coat, as he pointed towards the cheerful light streaming from the bow-window of the bar-parlour on to the sloppy and flooded road. He bent his chin well down upon his breast, in order that the broad-brimmed low-crowned hat, pulled over his eyes might protect his features as much as possible from the inclemency of the weather, and making the capacious sleeves of his outer garment muffs for his hands, as he crossed them one within the other, he looked from behind like a well-filled sack rolling along by imperceptible powers of locomotion.

The rapid rotary motion of wheels at the distance now caught his ear, and although within a few yards of the haven he was seeking, he stopped short, and turning round, saw a blaze of lamps, looking like the eyes of a monster in the darkness coming quickly towards him.

"Oh," said he, communing with himself, "mail's a comin' up, eh? Thought she'd **P**assed."

Within a few seconds, and as the speaker **r**eached the threshold of the Harrow and **P**itchfork, up dashed four reeking horses, **s**adly at a loss for wind, while the wet, **m**ire, and sweat, trickled in streams from **t**heir coats.

"Now then, Ned," hallooed the coachman **b**oarsely, as he threw his unbuckled reins **u**pon the backs of the wheelers, "look **s**har-r-p!" and as he spoke he descended **q**uickly from his seat, and hastened towards **t**he entrance of the inn.

"What, Burly James!" said he, giving a **f**riendly smack between the shoulders of the **w**earer of the drab coat, as he blocked up **t**he doorway. "Is that you, my son?"

"Ay, Jonathan," replied the individual addressed as Burly James, "that's me if I

haven't been lately changed for somebody else without my consent or knowledge."

"Pity you should be," rejoined the coachman. "But what brings ye down the road such a night as this?"

"A sort of duck inclination to wet my feet and soften my corns, I s'pose," returned Burly James, "or it might be, for aught you can tell, to meet my love. We rattling young fellers," continued he, "are sometimes given that way, you know," and then the drab coat churned up and down, as if an explosion of mirth was shaking his system like the irruption from a hidden volcano.

"Come," said Jonathan, "I've not much time to lose, and I'm cold within, as well as without. Let us hear what physic Missis Twigg will recommend for the complaint."

"Light load, I see," remarked Burly

James, flattening himself against the door-post, in order that room might be afforded for his friend to pass.

"One old woman and a bandbox," said the coachman, "a child and a bird-cage."

He was now joined by his nightly companion, the guard, a short, thickset individual, of whom little more could be seen, from among the layers of covering which defended his person, than the purple tip of his nose, and as the twain presented themselves before Mistress Twigg as customers for something hot and nourishing, it was jointly declared that the selection of the ingredients was to be exclusively left to her.

Mistress Twigg was pleased, Mistress Twigg was flattered; but there were difficulties in the way sometimes of suiting gentlemen's tastes. She had heard of brandy and water being recommended as a

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wholesome beverage for a wet, cold night and a long journey. She had also known some people give a preference to rum, while others considered whiskey to be better than either. "I once had an order," continued the hostess, "of a hot glass of elder berry with a soppet of toast in it; but that," continued she, with a smile closely allied to a sneer, "was from a commercial, and we all know what commercials are."

"Devilish bad pay," replied the guard in a voice which seemed to have taken its present tone from the pit of his stomach. "I took a good deal o' trouble to shake a commercial out of his sleep," said he, "a few nights ago; and when he'd got his eyes wide open, what do you think he tipped for Jonathan and Co.?"

It was impossible for Mistress Twigg to say, commercials were such strange customers.

"Sixpence, as I'm a sinner!" added the guard, drawing a step backwards, as if recounting an atrocious act of the deepest dye. "Sixpence, as I'm a *miserable* sinner!"

Mistress Twigg was not surprised, far from it. At the same time she should feel it a duty to pray that that commercial might not want the sixpence in his declining years; and if she knew his name and address, she would take particular care that he did *not*.

Both the coachman and guard appeared to consider this a most excellent joke, and laughed immensely, while the hostess handed a glass of something to each, which savoured well to the olfactory nerves, and seemed to give satisfaction the most absolute to their respective palates.

"Here's to the King!" said the loyal coachman, raising his glass.

"God bless him!" responded a voice,

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and upon examining the quarter whence it proceeded, the cauliflower head of Corporal Crump was detected reclining against the back of the widow's own particular chair, his limbs stretched before the fire, and his attitude proving beyond a doubt that, with his usual practical philosophy, he was rendering things as pleasant to himself as the nature of circumstances would admit.

"Who's that?" observed the guard, in a husky whisper, and pointing with straightened thumb in the direction of the corporal's seat.

"One of the military," replied Mistress Twigg, softly. "A fine old—or as I should say," continued she, checking herself—"middle-aged warrior. He's been I don't know where, and fought I don't know what, but if you could only spare the time and hear him talk, you'd say music was nothing to it."

"Hah!" sighed the guard, gloomily, "time wasn't made for such as we. The boot's on the other leg. We're made for time, and we must keep it, too. Now Jonathan, my Jerry-go-nimble! Take the ribbons, up you go, and set 'em moving."

"Since you put a kind of amendment to my toast," said the coachman, addressing the corporal at a distance, and holding out his glass, "perhaps you'll take a sip with me before I'm off, mate."

"We're not blessed with a superabundance of good offers in this world," replied the old soldier, rising from his position of perfect ease, and coming forward.

"Truer words were never spoken, mate," rejoined Jonathan, who in personal appearance bore a striking resemblance to his companion the guard; "and when we do catch one, we should put as much store by it as a pearl dropped in a hail-storm."

"Right," added the corporal; and as he delivered the monosyllable he received the proffered glass from the coachman's hand, and, to the infinite surprise of the bystanders, drained it to the last drop.

"There must be," continued he, with great gravity, at the finish of his draught, "no heeltaps where the King's concerned."

"Well!" returned the coachman, rolling his head from side to side, while the guard administered a few playful digs in his ribs and appeared on the point of making every button fly from his garments with the excess of mirth at seeing his friend "sold," as he called it, "I shan't forget that for the time to come."

"It's a way we have in the army," added the old soldier. "We always drink the King," and he brought a hand respectfully to his forehead, "in bumpers."

"He'll put it down in his memorandum"

book," croaked the guard, still greatly overcome by his convulsive merriment. "I know Jonathan won't let that slip from his recollection any more. But here, lad," continued he, "here's enough for both. You shan't climb into the box again without drinking the King," and then he rolled about with his fingers pressed upon his abdominal regions, as if his cachinnatory pleasure was not unattended with pain.

Corporal Crump, however, came to the rescue, and declared that there should be an end to a joke, as to all other games, when played out; and he ordered the coachman's glass to be forthwith replenished at his own expense, and his Majesty was pledged with due honour, and hearty grasps were exchanged, and good humour reigned paramount, as the guard announced, after studying the face of a thick plethoric watch, which he tugged with the greatest difficulty

from a fob, the impossibility of their staying the hundredth part of a second longer.

With a nimbleness, which at a glance they appeared incapable of exhibiting, both now hurried away to mount their respective seats.

“Hold fast; let go their heads,” hallooed Jonathan.

Twang, twang, twa-a-ang went the horn, and with a plunge, the high-mettled cattle sprang forward on their stage, like fleet-pinioned birds of the night.



CHAPTER XIII.

As soon as the mail had become lost both to sight and hearing, the wearer of the drab coat, after taking a friendly leave of Jonathan and the guard, quitted his station at the doorway of the Harrow and Pitchfork, and presented himself at the bar.

"Why," said he, "you've been pretty merry here, I've a notion, if laughin's any sign; although," continued he, taking off his hat, and shaking the wet from it, "I've heerd of folk's laughin' loudest when most miserable."

"That was not our case, Mr. Burly," replied the widow, "I'm glad to say; but pray come to the fire, Sir; you look too moist to be comfortable."

"But not a likely one to melt, Ma'am," rejoined Mr. Burly, making a successful struggle to free himself from his drab coat. "James Burly, so described in the register of his baptism, given unto the same by his godfathers and godmothers but better known in these heathenish parts as Burly James, isn't one likely to melt, Ma'am, I should say, unless, indeed he was duly trussed and spitted before roasting fire. In that case," continued he "I shouldn't be surprised but the blessed old Christian's remainders might be found in the drippin'-pan."

"Reely," returned the widow, raising the corner of her neat black silk apron to her eyes, and shaking like a lively jelly fish.

"my customers are too much for me to-night. I'm laughing beyond my strength."

"Don't give way to weakness, Ma'am," added Burly James, stretching himself in the act of suspending his hat and coat on a high peg in the passage. "I've known some folks, particularly stout 'uns, give way to frightful weaknesses when laughing beyond their strength."

Mr. Burly was now ushered through the bar into the parlour, and the formal ceremony of introduction took place between himself and the corporal.

"Glad to make your acquaintance," said the old soldier, giving the stranger a professional salute.

"The same to you, Sir, and many of them," responded Burly James, bowing as a cod-fish might be supposed to do; being, like that finny denizen of the deep, devoid of any intermediate space between his head

and his shoulders. "The same to you Sir," repeated he, slowly dropping himself into a seat opposite the corporal's, "and many of them."

To say that Mr. Burly was fat, stout, full-habited, or indeed, to apply any conventional term, generally used as an antithesis to a light and airy form, would in no way serve as a faithful description of his particular mould. To use his own words "he was all muscle." It was an often vaunted boast of Burly James, that he could crack a walnut between the calves of his legs, which resembled a pair of small oyster barrels, bend a kitchen poker over the biceps of his arms, and carry the cool who weighed not an ounce less than seventeen stones, two miles and a half, with perfect ease to himself and comfort to her.

Athletic, however, as James Burly doubtlessly was, not the weakest of his

kind ever felt less disposed to exercise the powers of bone, thew, and sinew in a pugnacious or hostile spirit, than himself. As he frequently observed, "he would much prefer walking a mile than fighting a minute:" and yet no sooner did he become introduced to a stranger, than he seemed to consider it indispensable to impress upon the mind of that stranger—"that he was all muscle."

"Feel that, Sir," said Mr. Burly, bending up his dexter arm at a right angle, and developing a hard, impenetrable knot. "What do you say to that, Sir?"

"Strong," replied Corporal Crump, squeezing the limb, "very strong."

"Straight from the shoulder, and delivered with a will," rejoined Burly James, making a playful blow in the air, "and I wonder where a hooked nose would be?"

“Flat,” returned the corporal, “or I’m greatly mistaken.”

“Flat,” repeated Mr. Burly, “as as a muffin: but don’t you run away with the i-deea that I’m a fightin’ man. By no means. I love my neighbour as myself, and would as soon think of bunging up my own eyes, or a givin’ my own figure-head an upper-cut on the nut-crackers, as his’n. At the same time,” continued he, stretching out his legs, “feel those.”

The corporal good-naturedly conformed to this desire, and again said, “Strong, very strong.”

“Lor’ love ye!” ejaculated Burly James, jumping up, and hitting himself a sonorous thwack with a clenched fist on his breast: “I’m sound wind and limb, and as hard as a horsebean. There’s nothin’ doughy, Sir, about me.”

Without exactly perceiving the end to

which this personal matter of discussion was to lead, Corporal Crump gave a willing assent to the proposition, and Mr. Burly, apparently satisfied with having carried his point, quietly took his chair again, and called for "a stoop of the widow's sooperlative."

"I suppose," said Burly James, "that you're acquainted before now with the widow's own sooperlative?"

The corporal conjectured that he alluded to the regular old scratch-me-down.

"The same," rejoined Mr. Burly, "the very same identical. Better was never brewed from malt and hops, as I'm open any day to swear before a justice o' the peace."

The capacious measure was now brought forth from the tap, from which the smiling Mistress Twigg had foamed it with a white diadem to the rim.

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There are pleasures too deep for utterance, and it may fairly be supposed that Mr. Burly's was of this ilk; for as he took the brown jug from the hands of the hostess, he at once became as mute as a mole, and, with features creaming with inward satisfaction, raised it to his lips, and for a time retired from the world.

To lose an opportunity is to be prodigal of time, and therefore, the present shall be embraced, as apparently the most seasonable one, to complete the sketch of Burly James's exterior.

Of rather under the middle height, his thick-set form gave him the squareness of a die, and his body being considerably longer in proportion to his legs, caused him to sit almost as high as he stood. His head round as a marble, was covered with a thick, short crop of black hair, which stood on end "like quills upon the fretful por-

cupine;" and his fat, red, chubby countenance brought forcibly to mind that of a good-tempered fat boy's, out for a holiday. Sleek, shiny, and red, Burly James looked the very pink of health and good temper, and the only marks or wrinkles in his features were a few indented lines about the neighbourhood of his eyes, which looked to have been scored by "loving laughter," rather than by the crow's foot of age or care.

There was nothing strikingly peculiar in Mr. Burly's costume, excepting, perhaps, the waistcoat. A prodigious garment was this waistcoat, and looked as if originally designed for a giant of extraordinary stature. It reached an inch or two below the wearer's knees, had great pockets and large flaps in, and under which Burly James buried his hands, when at a loss what to do with those useful members of

his frame. A white cravat was supposed to be twisted round where his neck ought to have been; but the double-chin of which he was possessed left not a vestige of it visible, and a square bow in front, tied with the nicest care, lent the only support to this supposition.

Mr. Burly, perchance, was an admirer of contrast; for the coat which he wore was as short in the skirt as his waistcoat was long, and being rounded off at the corners, gave to view a certain width and rotundity of form, which, otherwise, might have been concealed to some trifling advantage.

“Hah!” gasped he, upon the conclusion of a draught which, from his deep mulberry complexion, appeared forced from a total loss of breath, “I wish I had a neck as long as a heron’s, and every inch a palate, when I lap the widow’s own superlative.”

I do indeed," continued Burly James, "upon the soul of a Briton."

Mistress Twigg now drew a chair not far removed from Corporal Crump's, and observing, "that she did not expect many more customers would drop in on such a stormy night," proceeded to dispense her smiles and attentions, although truth demands it to be declared not in equal divisions, between the old soldier and Mr. Burly.

"It is not a little strange," remarked the widow, and the gay ribbons in her cap fluttered as she spoke, "that you two gentlemen have never met before. It has so happened," continued she, letting the corporal see, if he thought proper, that she still was in possession of a fine set of teeth, "that when one has come in, the other's just gone out, and when the other's gone out, the other's just come in. Fate," said

the widow, rocking a crossed foot with a rapid movement, so that the most careless observer could scarcely fail to have seen that, for a woman on an extensive scale, it was remarkably small and neat; "fate; there's fate in a sparrow's fall."

"No doubt o' that, Marm," replied the corporal, settling himself in his seat as if he were about saying something which he expected to be listened to. "If the greatest actions of the greatest men, living or dead, were but traced to their true source, it's my o-pinion, Marm—the o-pinion of an old soldier—mind ye, that they'd look as if seen all at once through the wrong end of the glass. It's human natur, d'ye see, to praise success and to run down defeat; but—save us all!—the luck which wins the game is often no more due to the player's skill, than the loss, frequently, to his want of it. Fate," exclaimed Corporal Crump

with histrionic effect, "there's fate in the blowing of a feather!"

The hostess gave a sidelong glance at Mr. Burly's countenance, to learn what impression had been made on that individual's mind by the corporal's eloquence, and was not a little pleased to perceive that his pale sea-green eyes were blinklessly fixed with unmistakable attention.

"I've heerd that you had the gift o' the gab," returned Mr. Burly, "and now I know it. I say, Sir, now I know it," repeated he, and he again retired from the world by burying himself in the yawning mouth of the capacious brown jug.

Upon emerging again from its depths, the loss of breath was more palpable than before, and the apoplectic hue of his countenance heightened to almost an alarming extent.

"Like the man with the steam leg," said

Burly James upon recovering from some of his pressing difficulties, "I can't leave off when once set a-movin'. The widow's sooperlative is to me what sugar is to flies. But," continued he, "goin' from beer to poetry, what I was a-goin' to observe was, some folks can speak their sentiments, while others can think 'em. Now, I'm one of the latter saints. I can't say a deal; it doesn't lie in my small-clothes to speak upon any matter worth listening to. But if it did, if I could only give rope to what I think now and then—" Mr. Burly, raising his voice, appeared worked up to a point and, bringing a hand with unnecessary violence upon one of his unoffending calves as it rested peacefully across a knee, ejaculated, "hang my buttons!"

Mistress Twigg nodded slightly to the corporal as much as to say that she fully coincided in this self-laudatory opinion of

subject.

"I once waited a gentleman," said Mr. Burly, who, notwithstanding his avowed want of the accomplishments of speech, appeared disposed to let no long pause intervene without exercising those he possessed, "and in that situation I improved both in mind and manners; but I never could catch master's flow o' the gab. It was altogether beyond my reach."


"May I ask, without offence," observed Corporal Crump, "what's your present calling, provided you haven't retired on your fortune?"

"And in no ways likely thereto," replied Burly James, "worse luck. But as there's

in the service of Squire Woodbee of the Oaks up there," continued he, pointing in the direction of the mansion.

"Oh, indeed!" rejoined the corporal, "I was not aware that I was speaking to one of that gentleman's establishment."

"Well!" returned Mr. Burly, but he spoke as if a doubt hung in his words, "I suppose, as the world wags, he may be called a gentleman. He's got money, and that's qualifications enough for the title now o' days; but he's not of the breed that I waleted, Mr. Corporal. By no means. He *was* a gentleman, he was, and when I took him by the nose to shave him of a mornin', I felt as if I was takin' a liberty. But now mark the difference between my feelin's then and at the present. I'm coachman to Squire Woodbee, and when he occasionally sits with his face to my back, I consider that he's in possession of a prospect,



Sir, which ought to refresh his eye-sight. These are *my* sentiments, and I defy mortal man, or his immortal enemy the devil, to turn 'em the span of a barleycorn, right or left."

"The neighbourhood is not improved by the new family," sighed the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork.

"New family!" repeated Burly James with a sneer which seemed to be double-edged, and whetted to the keenest edge. "Whoever heard, Ma'am, of anything new doing good? Give me," continued he with enthusiasm, "everything that's old. Old friends, old ale, old wood to burn, old songs to sing, old tales to tell, old times, old trees; let's have nothin' young but women!"

"Gently, comrade," remarked Corporal Crump, by way of a sedative to Mr. Burly's mounting excitement; "gently does it!"

"Istand co-rected, Mr. Corporal," rejoined

Burly James. "We sometimes break in our paces like high-trotting horses, and want a steady hand to make us go straight and true."

"And yet," said Mistress Twigg, with inward admiration of Corporal Crump's delicate check, "the lady and Master Woodbee are a dear, sweet mother and child."

"No one can gainsay that, Ma'am," replied Mr. Burly. "Poor broken-down young sperrets," continued he, "I feel for 'em more with a parent's tender buzzum than a coachman's. There was a time, and not long since neither, when they looked happy enough together; but now they pine and are as sorrowful as a pair of separated pigeons."

"How's that?" briefly asked the corporal.

"Master Leonard's a-goin' to be made a great scholard of, I believe," responded Mr. Burly; "and a greyhound-looking chap,

called Starkie, keeps him pounding away at his dreary books with a sort of savage pleasure, in my opinion, in making the pretty, pale-faced boy as miserable as he can."

"I wish I was lady manager at the Oaks for a few weeks, say a month," rejoined Mistress Twigg, with an air of determination which almost startled Corporal Crump, "and I'd let them see if they should serve a child of mine like that. Books are well enough in their way," continued she. "I am not going to speak against books; but let them make a pretty, pale-faced boy of mine miserable, that's all!" and the widow's eyes sparkled at that moment as if mentally occupied in committing a valuable library to the flames.

"You've a sperret, Ma'am," returned Mr. Burly, "and sperret often flies over obstacles which, with others of a tamer nature, brings

them down on their knees and noses. No my missis, poor dear lady ! ” continued he with a compassionate movement of his head “ is amazingly tame. She may have had will of her own, like the rest of her sex, long ago ; but if so, Ma’am, it’s gone, gone before her youth and beauty.”

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Mistress Twigg, “ if had the making of laws, instead of those saps in the House of Commons, I’d soon pass one to stop elderly gents from taking your inexperienced wives to their bosom. Talk of an old man’s darling, indeed ! ” said the widow, with bitter irony. “ An old man’s baby is what they become, with more freedom of speech or motion of body than one in swaddling clothes. I would make it a penal offence for a respectable healthy, clean old gentleman, with a white waistcoat, to take a partner for the few remaining years he has to live ; but let th

partner be a woman a match for him in all respects," and Mistress Twigg drew her breath between her teeth, as if her last words comprehended more than they would appear to express.

"I'm quite of your opinion, Ma'am," observed Corporal Crump. "People when they marry, ought to be matched as well as paired. But from what you have said," continued he, turning to Mr. Burly, "I suppose the Squire's lady is far from being happy."

"Happy!" repeated Burly James. "Can a frog be happy under a harrow? Can a goose be happy when being plucked alive? Can a moth be happy when its wings are singed off?"

"But why, then, did she marry him?" asked the corporal.

"Ha!" ejaculated Mr. Burly. "There's a tale to that, depend on't, although it never came to my ears."

The hours were far advanced by the small coterie separated; and as Burroughs clutched the corporal's hand, an eternal friendship on the threshold of the outer door, he appeared in need of steadying, like a butt after losing equilibrium.

"*Good-ite-corpl,*" said he in a staccato tone. "Stick to the widder, and, and taking the probability account, she'll stick to you. There's no one like her soo—soo—sooperl'tiv', as I can any day to swear before a justice of peace."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE skill of Dr. Grimes seemed to be put at defiance by the low intermitting fever which his interesting patient laboured under from the day that his attendance was required. The apothecary prescribed the best remedies that could be drawn from his knowledge and experience, and among them was a strict injunction that she should be kept as quiet as possible.

“In these cases of physical prostration,” said Dr. Grimes to Jacob, who made it a point to waylay him daily as he quitted the

chamber of sickness, "accompanied as t~~he~~
 invariably are by general excitement of 1
 frame, we can do little more than assist C
 best nurse Nature by the simplest of mea~~s~~
 Repose may be classed among the first; a
 if you, my dear Sir, will attend to this
 shall exercise my best endeavours to sup~~p
 the rest."~~

"If a mouse but nibbles in the wainsco^t
 replied the little general shopkeeper, res^{olutely}, "I'll put it to flight."

"And it would be as well," rejoined I
 Grimes, "to draw that picture of a child o
 of the room as much as possible, and for h
 to be persuaded to remain out a mu
 longer period than she usually does. T
 mother's anxiety is evidently great abo
 the child, and the child sits, with her lar
 eyes filled with tears, looking at the moth
 in a way which cannot fail to produce
 most unfavourable action on the nervo

systems of both. This, my dear Sir," continued he, shaking his head as became a medical practitioner, "is bad, radically bad, and, to use strong language, must not be. We do not make the progress which I hoped and, indeed, expected; for what we gain one day appears to be lost the next."

"A step forward and a step backward," eh Doctor?" returned Jacob, despondingly.

"Precisely so, my dear Sir," added Doctor Grimes, "and nothing can be more unsatisfactory than such a stand-still proceeding. Now I would suggest that little Clara, as she is familiarly called by her best friends, should accompany me in my rounds to my patients this morning. There's quite a fund of amusement for her. In the first place, I have to extract a double tooth from the upper jaw of as unruly a boy as I ever saw in my life. Then there's poor old Keeble's compound fracture of his right leg

to reduce, and Jane Fubbs's child to vaccinate. Poor Mrs. Brown is still too full, much too full," continued the doctor, reflectively, "and must be copiously bled. In the almshouses there are a few blisters to dress; and with one thing or another, my dear Sir, I feel sure that the morning would pass pleasantly enough."

"A run in the fields with the corporal," said Jacob, "will please her more, I think, Doctor."

"But can she be induced to go into the fields with the corporal?" asked Doctor Grimes. "That's the question, my very dear Sir. I never either see or hear of her quitting her mother's side; and really it has become indispensable that she should do so. I say indispensable," said the doctor, forcibly, "from the fact that I cannot answer for the consequences unless she does."

"Little Clara only requires to be told so,"

replied Jacob, "and she will conform without a murmur."

"In that case," returned the doctor, "let the information be given without delay, and upon my next visit I shall hope to see an amendment in my patient."

With a promise that his instructions should be obeyed with the utmost strictness, Doctor Grimes took his departure, and, as was his wont, bowed himself out with the utmost politeness.

It was evening, and in bygone times the curfew would have tolled from that old church tower whose vane was tipped with the golden tints of the setting sun. Long faint shadows were streaked upon the earth, and the thin white mist began to roll along the valley, like a bridal veil spun by fairy hands. Shard-borne beetles hummed drowsily through the air, and the churr of the goat-

sucker heralded the reign of coming darkness. On the bank of an artificial lake, formed between two gentle declivities in the park surrounding the Oaks, and little short of half a mile from the mansion, Mrs. Woodbee and her son were strolling, as if unconscious or heedless of the closing hours of day. With one of her hands clasped in his, the boy occasionally turned his pale, care-worn face upwards, and met the kind, solicitous look bent upon him with a smile which seemed but too great a stranger there. Long and silent had been their walk, and the moon's pale ray already broke in silvery lines upon the rippling wave, and the cool refreshing breeze toyed among the child's curls as they danced like the tendrils of a vine upon his shoulders. Now and then the spring of a fish, leaping from the mirror-like surface of the lake, flashed upon the ear, and broke the water into wide-spreadin

eddies, which went circling on until they were lost in space.

"Shall we return now?" at length said Mrs. Woodbee. "It is getting late, and I fear you may take cold, dear boy."

"Not yet," replied Leonard, shuddering; "don't go back yet. My temples burn, and my head aches at the thought of going home. Let us stay here a little longer. I wish," continued he, with heart-felt sorrow in the tone, "that it could be for ever."

"Nay, nay, love," rejoined his mother, affecting a cheerfulness which ill accorded with her feelings. "We are not bats or owls to wander throughout the night, and I think, long before it was spent, you would be desirous for your little bed."

"I dream so frightfully," returned Leonard, "that I never wish to sleep. There was a time, and not long since," continued he, "when I dreamt of rambles such

as these, with you, dear mother, and romps with Blackthorn; and the birds seemed to be singing, and the flowers looked as bright as in the sunshine, and I awoke happier than I can tell."

"And so you will again, dear boy," added Mrs. Woodbee, scarcely able to control her feelings. "It is but temporary indisposition."

"Mother," said the child, in such an earnest tone and manner that his companion stopped involuntarily to gaze upon him. "I shall never be well again."

"God in his mercy forbid!" ejaculated she, catching him to her breast. "Say not so, my pretty lad," continued she, while the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"And still I think so," responded he. "My father and tutor tell me that I am obstinate, inattentive, and indolent; but it is not so, mother dear. Indeed I would learn if I could!"

“ ’Tis as cruel as ’tis unjust,” rejoined Mrs. Woodbee, in a voice quivering with emotion, “not to believe you. They must, they shall cease their persecution. And yet,” continued she, raising her hands supplicatingly, “what *can* I do?”

Scarcely had she spoken, when two figures were seen approaching through the dusky light, and immediately afterwards, greatly to her and Leonard’s astonishment, the stiff, drawn-up form of a man, to whose side a girl with a gipsy hat and flowing ringlets appeared to cling with fear, stood before them.

“Your pardon, my Lady,” said the former, placing a hand to his forehead, and keeping it there; “but I think we are out of our latitude.”

“May I ask,” replied Mrs. Woodbee, “who is speaking to me?”

“My military rank, my Lady, is that of a

retired corporal," rejoined he, "and my name's Crump."

"A stranger here, I suppose?" returned Mrs. Woodbee.

"Not exactly so," said the corporal, "and not altogether the reverse. We, that is to say," continued he, pointing to Clara, who stood shyly by, glancing at Leonard and his mother, "this young lady, her female parent, and your humble servant to command, Ma'am, have been quartered in these parts for some little time now, but not long enough, it would appear, to know the latitude of 'em."

"If I understand you then," added Mrs. Woodbee, "you have lost your path."

"You couldn't be more correct, Ma'am," responded the corporal, "had you been told so in plain English. We came out for a mouthful of fresh air—a pipe opener, as I call it—this evening, and, somehow or

other, did not follow our noses. The consequence is that here we are in a wrong path, leading we don't know where; but like a great many more duck-headed folk that I have met with in the highways and byeways of life, rushing on notwithstanding."

"Are you a soldier?" asked Leonard, who had kept his eyes stedfastly fixed upon the corporal with the deepest interest from the moment he avowed the nature of his calling.

"Ay, my young master," replied Corporal Crump, heartily, "and one who has seen some service."

"You could then tell me of battles," rejoined the boy, earnestly, "could you not?"

"Of many a one," said the corporal, "both lost and won."

"And will you do so?" asked Leonard,

going closer to him, and inserting a small delicate hand into one of the old soldier's broad, horny palms. "I love so to listen to such stories."

Well, well, Sir!" responded the corporal, "we may meet again, perhaps, at an earlier hour in the day, and then we'll see what can be rummaged from the knapsack of memory."

"And may I inquire the name of this pretty little girl?" observed Mrs. Woodbee, stooping and kissing Clara's brow.

Clara's cheeks mantled with blushes, and the words which rose upon her lips in reply died upon them.

"She's not been accustomed to strangers, my Lady," remarked the corporal, "and is much too bashful to show to any advantage before 'em; but I hope that time and drill will, in due course, make an alteration for the better. As I must take upon myself

the office of spokesman," continued he, "her name's Clara Somerset."

"Clara Somerset!" repeated Mrs. Woodbee, with little less surprise than if a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet. "Clara Somerset, did you say?" Not, not"—

"Daughter of the late Lieutenant Somerset of the King's Own Royals," added Corporal Crump.

"Now Heaven help me!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodbee, catching Clara in her arms, and smothering her with kisses. "Is this dear Ellen's child? Tell me," she continued, almost frantically, "is this so, or do I dream?"

"You ray-ther bewilder me, Ma'am," said Corporal Crump, feeling, among the very few times in his life, considerably astonished, "but what I have told you is the truth, and nothing but the truth."

"And where, where is your mamma,

dear one?" said Mrs. Woodbee, kneeling on the greensward, and clasping Clara tightly in her arms.

"In the village," replied Clara, timid as well as her surprise would permit, "very ill."

"Very ill!" ejaculated Mrs. Woodbee, a cry of anguish escaped her lips.

"But somewhat improved, my Lady," added the corporal, "since our arrival here;" for he saw how much these words pained her.

"And when was that?"

"Some six weeks ago."

"How inscrutable are the ways of Providence!" returned Mrs. Woodbee, and then her full heart could hold no more, and she wept long and bitterly.

"Why do you cry, Mamina," asked Leonard, "and who are these that you love so much?"

"Ask me not now, dear boy," replied his mother, "you shall learn all another time; but let me see you kiss this little girl," continued she, "for I'm sure you'll love one another."

With some degree of coyness, Clara presented her peach-like cheek for Leonard's salute; but was dumbfounded at the scene taking place before her.

"Not a minute longer must be lost," said Mrs. Woodbee, starting to her feet, and hastily drying her tears. "This path," continued she, "will take us to the village in less than ten minutes' walk. Come, we will go together to your mamma, dear, dear Clara."

CHAPTER XV.

YEARS, long years had passed, and they met again; but words could not convey the feelings of the sisters as, in each other's arms, they pressed breast to breast, and heart to heart. Their lips were silent, and yet a tale was told, of change and suffering, which time and sorrow bring like sneaping frosts.

They had been girls together long ago, and yet memory brought back the time, as memory only can, the happy hours when neither thought

cares of life, and knew only of its joys. And yet it seemed but yesterday.

After a thousand questions had been asked, and endearments exchanged, Mrs. Woodbee at length said,

“How could you keep it a secret from me, Ellen? Why not let me know the day, the hour that you arrived?”

The invalid smiled faintly at the reproof, and seeing that both Leonard and Clara were standing by, eagerly listening to each word that fell, observed, “I wish, dear children, that you would seek the corporal in the room below, and leave us alone for a few minutes. You will find him,” continued she, addressing Leonard, “a kind, good old man, full of martial stories, and as ready to tell them, as you doubtlessly will be to listen to the marvels.”

With manifest reluctance, the children quitted the apartment; for their curiosity

was excited, and each wished for a solution of the impenetrable mystery which surrounded them.

“You must not chide me, Alice,” said Mrs. Somerset, drawing gently from her sister’s embrace, and looking fondly at her through her tears, “for not apprising you of being near to one I love so well, and permitting accident to make the discovery. Being incapable of writing, dearest, whom could I trust?”

“I thought from your letters,” replied her sister, “that you possessed the greatest reliance in your old servant, whom you have just spoken of so commendably.”

“He is, indeed, worthy of all that I have said, and more,” rejoined Mrs. Somerset; “but I have never trusted even him with our secret.”

“Then how long would you have kept me in ignorance of your being here?” asked her sister.

“Not an hour longer,” returned Mrs. Somerset, “than I could have written and arranged for a note to fall into your hands, dearest. A message,” continued she, might have been fraught with the greatest dangers, as your husband—”

“Ay, I see it all,” added Mrs. Woodbee, holding her hands before her face; “it was the dread of him; and well indeed might you fear, Ellen; for such is his rancour even to the present hour, that did he but learn of our meeting here to-night, it would most assuredly be the last for years, and it might be that we should never meet again.”

“May God forgive him!” exclaimed the invalid, supplicatingly, “as I do.”

“Although subterfuge in any shape is most repelling,” continued Mrs. Woodbee, “I think it will be necessary to prevent our children from learning immediately the

relationship which exists between them. At so early an age, we cannot rely upon their prudence, and it is but natural that they should speak of subjects to others, as they feel them most interesting to themselves."

"We will then, Alice, only be," said Mrs. Somerset, smiling, "what in truth we are, old, long-trying friends, who have not met since we were merry, careless girls."

The sisters again embraced each other, and gave full scope to that affection which not of the earth, binds heart to heart, and is the purest of human love.

"Had it been thought of earlier," observed Mrs. Woodbee, "it might have been safer for you to have changed your name."

"In that case," responded her sister, "suspicions, or conjectures must have arisen for my so doing."

"True," returned Mrs. Woodbee, "I had forgotten that. However," continued she, "there is not a likelihood of its reaching my husband's ears; for he exchanges but few words with any one in the neighbourhood from year's end to year's end, and is absorbed in the one nurtured hope of seeing little Leonard a great and learned man."

"Still the same," added Mrs. Somerset. "Some loved project of selfish—"

"Stay, stay," interrupted her sister. "Remember, that whatever he may be, he is still my husband, and the father of my child."

"And were his faults ten-fold greater than they are, dear Alice," rejoined Mrs. Somerset, "that thought alone would silence me."

"We will not dwell on this subject," responded Mrs. Woodbee, "but turn to

others upon which we can speak with less restraint."

"As you say, so let it be," said her sister. "I would not have one named to-night that should rob a moment of its pleasure."

"And yet by that pale cheek," remarked Mrs. Woodbee, "I see there must be limits to what can be spoken now. You are still unequal to much exertion, Ellen."

"But more than equal to listen to that loved voice," replied her sister. "It bears me back to other days," continued she "and makes me think we are children now."

"And if stern Time would point that this was of the past," rejoined Mrs. Woodbee, cheerfully "we will still use our best endeavours to deceive the monitor. As soon as your strength's regained, we will climb the hills together, as we did in years

remembered, but passed away, and be one to another what we have been."

"To me," added Mrs. Somerset, "there could be no earthly joy equal to it. O Alice, that I could think it possible for such days to come again !"

"And why not?"

"Why not?" repeated the invalid, and then, after a moment's reflection, added in a low melancholy voice, "because they have gone, never to return."

At this juncture there was a light aerial knock at the door of the apartment, and to the permission being given for it to be opened, Jacob Giles presented himself to view, slightly rubbing the ends of his fingers, and looking somewhat aghast at his exposed position.

"Your parding, Mem," said the little general shopkeeper, bearing self-evidence of great confusion within, "and *your* parding

Mem," continued he, bending his pink scalp to the ladies respectively, and between them conjointly, in order that both might be hit by his well-directed double barrel of politeness, "but I was given to understand from below that I was wanted above."

"Although no positive intimation has been given to that effect," replied Mrs. Somerset, with a smile, "yet I am glad to have the opportunity of introducing to you, Alice, one of my most invaluable friends, Mr. Jacob Giles."

"We are not strangers to each other," rejoined her sister, "and I beg to offer my warmest thanks," continued she, addressing the little general shopkeeper, "for your attention, kindness, and hospitality to this my best and dearest friend."

"O. Mem!" exclaimed Jacob, "don't mention that, Mem. I'm too proud, too rejoiced, so to speak, of the opportunity of

performing a small service, if so be it can be considered as such."

"Indeed, a greater could scarcely be rendered to me," said Mrs. Somerset, "and I shall ever feel grateful for it."

"All I can say is, Mem," returned Jacob, "that if you're disposed to be pleased with me for anything I may be supposed to have done, "you'll o-bleege me particularly by not mentioning one word about it. My snuggery, Mem, and anything that the general shop contains, is at your service, morning, noon, and night; now, henceforth, and for ever more."

"Until better able to bear fatigue," added Mrs. Woodbee, "I think it better, Ellen, for you to remain here."

"And when able, Mem," said Jacob, with the politeness of a courtier, "I hope that I shall not then lose my lady lodgers. I was a lone individual, Mem," continued he,

“before you dropped, as it were, under my roof, and since then, what with the corporal’s stories of an evening, rambles in the fields, now and then, with Miss Clara, consultations with Doctor Grimes, superintending Bridget in manufacturing the gruel, and the other little light occupations, really the time passes with a freshness amounting to perfect enjoyment.”

After receiving an assurance that no likelihood existed of any immediate interruption to the little general shopkeeper’s beatitude, he inquired, as if from habit, “What was the next article?” made a short bow in correction of the mistake, and dived, with a blushing countenance, among his sugars, teas, coffees, and multifarious articles of commerce, in his emporium below.

CHAPTER XVI.

BRIDGET, in whose person the respective denominations of the entire category of female domestics was centred, has hitherto escaped description, and yet, if for the mere purpose of showing Corporal Crump's extraordinary powers of subduing an unruly, perverse, and arbitrary spirit, Bridget must not be allowed to pass like a shadow at eventide.

She was one of those remnants of other days, which it is difficult for the imagination to conceive was ever otherwise than crooked

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in the spine, stiff jointed, and rheumatic. The highest flight of fancy could scarcely draw a picture of Bridget's infancy. Large jawed, thin, and wrinkled, with a skin like parchment or old wax, she shuffled about in large thick shoes, which slipped from her heels at every step, and brought to mind a couple of canoes. Her toothless and sunken jaws brought the tip of her nose in close proximity to the end of her chin, and her bleared grey eyes were buried behind fringes of strong wiry bristles which sprouted from her brows like ill-weeds which had grown apace.

Devoid as Bridget's costume doubtless was of the smallest approach or claim to elegance, it at least possessed a powerful one in support of its simplicity. A black checked kind of sack or bag, fastened round the throat with a large horn button behind, hung somewhat scantily about her person.

and a snowy white apron girdling her waist, made a division or boundary line in a figure as flat and undeveloped at all points as a schoolboy's slate. A mob cap with a heavy curtain, not dissimilar to the valance of a bed tester, flapped across her features, and added to the fancy portrait of the celebrated old woman who lived in her shoe, or any of the same family mounting brooms, and in the strict confidence of fate and futurity.

The earlier history of Bridget is lost in the vortex of time, and her origin a mystery; but for many years she had held a kind of despotic sway in Jacob's household which the little general shopkeeper had not the spirit to resist.

In possession of a convenient hardness of hearing, Bridget made a rule to listen to no order or directions, but what coincided exactly with her inclination to fulfil, and

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was alike indifferent to praise, as stoically deaf to censure. Like the compass, in spite of turning, twisting, or shaking, she pointed but one way, and that was her own.

As may be anticipated, the arrival of the strangers within that territorial domain which she had hitherto regarded as tabooed from the presence of maid, wife, or widow, was exceedingly objectionable to Bridget, and she made no concealment of her feelings. Indeed, from the moment of discovering that Mrs. Somerset, Clara, and the corporal, were to become residents in that domicile which she looked upon as her own, her indignation was not confined to a silent expression, and she forthwith opened a battery of annoyances of great force and considerable effect.

The kitchen fire was always out when required to be in, and could not be made to burn when most wanted. Saucepans

and kettles clattered from their shelves at all hours of the day. The warming pan continually fell from the top of the stairs to the bottom in the still hour of night. If the corporal's linen was undergoing the simple process of airing, it was sure to fall against the bars of the grate, or the chimney *would* smoke, or the cat took a strange delight in clawing his shirt among the cinders. The eccentricities of the cat, singular to relate, began to exceed all bounds; for upon putting his hat on hastily one morning, Corporal Crump found, to his great dismay, that he had taken a shower bath of kittens. All this was very distressing, and the feelings of the little general shop-keeper became painfully excited at the unintermitting calamities which now rattled like hail upon his house. He was continually expostulating with the uncompromising Bridget, smoothing the irate

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feelings of the corporal, apologising to his lady lodger, and, in short, maintaining peace upon the most desperate terms.

Matters, however, grew daily worse, and at length Jacob Giles began to entertain a feeling of despair which creeps into the heart and "steals the life from promise."

"Leave her to me, comrade," said the corporal, using his right hand as if in the act of laying on a round dozen upon the back of some imaginary culprit, "leave her to me, comrade," repeated he, "and I'll soon drill her into form."

With a few slight misgivings concerning the result of this boast, Jacob abandoned the obdurate Bridget to the ordeal, and the management was duly transferred from his hands to those of the old soldier.

Vested with his authority, the corporal resolved to lose no time in wielding it, and

he at once marched straight to the attack with "his soul in arms, and eager for the fray."

It was Saturday night, and the corporal found that Bridget, as usual, had caused sad havoc with that weekly change of under garments which he regarded both as essential and luxurious. The spotless shirt, when suspended before the kitchen fire by his own hands, was all that could be desired for the succeeding day's display; but during the interval of his doing so and now, a kettle of boiling water had been upset or assisted to fall, and myriads of grimy specks were sprinkled upon its front, as if thrown in profusion from a pepper-box.

"Now, Marm," said Corporal Crump, with a savage expression, holding up the soiled garment before Bridget's eyes, as she sat making a fair imitation of a cobweb in the heel of a dilapidated stocking, "isn't this a

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burning shame and a sin of the blackest dye?"

Bridget, as before has been remarked, was hard of hearing, and appeared to be as deaf to the question as she was blind to the questioner. With eyes fixed upon her work, she continued to ply her needle deftly, and crooned the snatch of an old ballad with a merry air, if not tuneful voice.

"I say, Marm," thundered the corporal, for his temper was in no way improved by Bridget's contemptuous conduct, "do you hear what I say?"

"Eh?" replied she, placing a hand behind an ear, and peeping slyly upwards through her shaggy brows at the old soldier's flushed visage. "Eh?" repeated she. "Did you speak?"

"I did, by Heaven!" rejoined the corporal, working to a high pitch of fury. "I'm here for the particular purpose of speaking to you,

you old section of the gibbeted ghost of a dead marine!"

"Eh!" ejaculated Bridget; but from the startled expression upon her countenance it was obvious that her deafness had met with temporary relief.

"Ah!" returned Corporal Crump, with a crack of his lips, "I shall be heard presently, I see—you floor-scrubbing, bed-making, boot-blackening, knife-cleaning, dish-washing, mouldy old land crab!"

"It's me you're speaking to, is it?" said Bridget, in the shrill, piping tone of exasperated rage, as she placed her arms akimbo, and wagged her head, "you two yards of pipe-clayed skin, bone, and beggary!"

"Ugh, you crooked, lop-sided, bottomless, ancient virgin!" retorted the corporal, snapping his fingers.

"Ye dirty, foul-mouthed villain!"

screeched Bridget. "Is it me that a vargin?"

"If it comes to that," added he, subdued tone, but threatening
"you're a substantive!"

"A what?" screamed Bridget, "y barrel of Satan's own!"

"An infamous old participle!" con the corporal.

"Queen of Heaven!" exclaimed B, clasping her hands together. "He struck dumb presently."

"An illegitimate Adverb!" rejoined corporal.

"Bless-ed Saints!" ejaculated B, turning up her eyes.

"A nominative case!" shouted he.

"The devil will be here presently!" Bridget, horror-stricken. "Send for pra'st."

"An adjective!"

"Sprinkle us with holy water!"

"A miserable conjunction!"

"Mary, darling, it's me that paid the pra'st! His rivirence didn't tell lies for me for nothing," sobbed Bridget.

"A cross-grained, crumple-nosed, crusty noun!"

Bridget crossed herself devoutly, but said nothing.

"A perpendicular rectangle!" continued the corporal, for he saw his vantage, and determined to follow it up.

Bridget would have spoken, but found the parts of speech too big for utterance.

"And if," said Corporal Crump, "further particulars are wanted, smut my Sunday shirt again; make a kitten nest of my hat, put pins, needles, salt, chopped hair, and dried thistles in my shake-down; upset the pots, kettles, and warming pan when I'm asleep; put gunpowder in my 'backy, and

you shall have them, Mistress Bridget, by an earlier post perhaps than you may expect.’’

Jacob’s housekeeper felt the full effect of the corporal’s home-thrust, and, like many similarly-constituted persons, discovered that her secret plans were far more public than she possessed the slightest conception of.

The simple fact, perhaps, is scarcely worthy of record; but the succeeding week Corporal Crump found that his shirt was not only aired without a single mischance to the general getting up, but that it was spread over the back of a chair in his dormitory, with the tail turned up ready to put on.

Such is the force of well-timed correction—

CHAPTER XVII.

SQUIRE Woodbee was partaking of the matin meal commonly known by the name of breakfast. Immediately fronting the all-important, self-sufficient, and grandiloquent proprietor of the Oaks, sat Mrs. Woodbee, and, but for the intervention of a hissing urn, which sent forth successive clouds of steaming vapour, the Squire might have perceived, notwithstanding the very slight notice he deigned usually to take of his wife's expression of features, that she was sad, and had been weeping.

Between the two, Dr. Starkie might have been perceived, seemingly engrossed in the act of delicately chipping the shell from an egg, but a keen observer would have discovered, from the sidelong glances which he made, occasionally, from the extreme corners of his small, rat-like eyes, upon Mr. and Mrs. Woodbee, that his thoughts were not monopolized in this simple task. The Oxford double-first prize-man knew the value of time, and was making the most of the present, with a careful regard for the future.

The Squire coughed, not from necessity, but as a sound man coughs when upon the very best terms with himself, and in expectation that these terms will be accepted, acknowledged, and deference paid to them by an appreciating public.

"I may be wrong, Doctor," remarked Squire Woodbee, pursing his lips together,

and throwing out the prodigious white waistcoat; "I say I may be wrong," repeated he, and then a smile played about the regions of his mouth, as if the probability was at least remote; "but the first principles of force in my opinion, is the condensation of power."

"A mathematical theorem, my dear Sir," replied Dr. Starkie, producing a most palpable parenthesis. "That steam," continued he, pointing to the vapour curling upwards from the urn, "illustrates your proposition. Generating to disseminate itself merely in the air, the force which is its attribute is lost; but condense the power within a finite space, and its might becomes self-evident."

"Exactly so," rejoined the Squire, flattered with the doctor's acquiescence, "and it is the want of condensation of power which causes the same waste both of mental and

physical exertions which we perceive in the generating of that vapour. If we, Sir, having an object to attain, would but concentrate our energies, and practise a stubborn self-denial towards every temptation or inducement which might turn them from it, success would generally attend the effort.

“Philosophical reasoning!” observed Dr. Starkie, slightly nodding at the ceiling above his head.

“My object,” continued the Squire, sententiously, “was money. To make it is easier than to save it; but the possession is power, and *that*, Doctor, was the aim of my *condensed* energies. It is by no means difficult to crawl through life; worms and grubs are found on the earth. To soar above it, however, is worthy of the energies of a man,” and he tapped the middle button of the white waistcoat significantly—“is

worthy," repeated he, and his breast projected like the inflated crop of a pouter pigeon, "of the energies of a man."

"It would appear from the researches of political economists," returned the doctor, "that while a nation is given to industrial pursuits—and industrial pursuits are but the means to the end—it is in the gradation of advancement, both social and otherwise; but the moment these are abandoned for speculative, chimerical, or distracting objects, she is making a retrograde movement. Now, a nation is but a family on an extensive scale, and a family is composed of individuals. What, therefore, may be the habits or pursuits of individuals comprising that nation, in a general point of view, such must be the condition of the commonwealth. Nothing," continued he, "remains stationary. The planets make their evolutions; seasons come and go;

night succeeds the day ; death treads life ; the tides ebb and flow, and, as Nature's universal law of perpetual, ceasing change, so it is with our artificial disposition of circumstances. Either we are progressing or retrograding."

"I have entertained that sentiment from a very early period" added the Squire, "and it may be said to have been the pilot who has sat at my helm. To advance, Doctor said he, with a chuckle, "to jostle and shove the weaker from the front places, and to be over scrupulous in taking them yours is one of the best methods of making way in this world. With money there are few obstacles to prevent a man from doing that but if he hasn't money he must wheedle. Accident may, now and then, present opportunity for catching a few stray favors of Fortune; but those worth possessing are, for the most part, paid for in some

coin or other. Wheedling passes current for lack of the more genuine medium."

"Wealth," said Doctor Starkie, "gives to the possessor a power to command that which may prove, or be thought likely to prove, most gratifying to the senses. As tastes differ, so will the means vary; but so long as self-esteem, which is a phrenological term for selfishness, be an inherent quality of human nature, so long will flattery, or, as you, my dear Sir, facetiously call it wheedling, be the homage paid by the poor and lowly to the rich and exalted. Life is a game in which he who has little or nothing to lose, seeks to win from his more fortunate neighbours; and experience, the sternest of monitors, teaches us that no more accessible breach is open in the breast of man than that which may be reached through flattery."

"You have studied something more than

Latin and Greek, Doctor," remarked Woodbee, with a laugh.

"A bookworm is but a miser of men's genius," resumed the doctor. "I should be most unfitted to hold the honorable office of preceptor to your son. I overlooked the most profitable of all to the man of the world—his own men."

"Hah!" ejaculated Squire Woodbee. "but in finding out the weakness of our neighbours we are apt to forget our own."

"Because there is no looking-glass to reflect the weakest," returned Doctor Woodbee. "our vanity. Few but think better of themselves than others, and rare is the man who freely admits the existence of the virtue of which he feels no trace in his breast."

"Stripped of all deceit," added the

chuckling, "and the most virtuous deeds would assume but a dusky complexion."

"Whatever may have been said or written by moralists," said the doctor, "both the best and the worst actions of which the human mind is capable of conceiving possess a common origin—self-gratification. We frequently," continued he, "are short sighted, and discover that that which we anticipated would contribute to our pleasures, acts in precisely an opposite direction; but the *animus* was indulgence, and to this root may be traced every motive dictating the deeds of men, be they for good or be they for evil."

"According to your code then, Doctor," responded his companion, "both what the world calls good, and that which it designates evil, are alike the offspring of innate selfishness."

"Without a doubt, my dear Sir," rejoined

Doctor Starkie, "and the best among us would be the most wicked, had not either their hopes or fears been awakened as to the probable result being less favourable to their own individual advantage."

"Is there no such thing as virtue?" innocently inquired Mrs. Woodbee.

"Oh, yes!" replied the doctor, drawing back the extreme angles of his mouth.

"Virtues, my dear Madam, are not extinct as popular constituent principles of pleasing ourselves."

"Then what is charity, mercy, or repentance?" asked Mrs. Woodbee, almost surprised at her boldness of examining the Oxford double-first prize-man.

"Each would form the subject of a long essay," returned the doctor, with the parenthesis in a most distinct form, "but charity, my dear Madam, may be defined as liberally giving away that which we do not want, of

grudgingly what we do; mercy, as an award of short measure to justice; and repentance, sorrow for the past pleasures of sin."

Squire Woodbee felt unusual satisfaction at this reply, and considered the circumstance most fortuitous in possessing such a tutor for his son.

"He will make my boy a man of the world, like himself," said he, inwardly, "and that is the seed for the future's harvest."

There were different feelings in the bosom of the mother, and she fervently wished that Doctor Starkie's shadow had never darkened the doorway of the Oaks.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIKE a spring flower gradually developing its shades and colors in the quickening sun, Clara Somerset's charms grew apace, and the child of yesterday began to assume a riper stage. Solicitous, kind, and affectionate, she was ever a close attendant upon her mother, who remained flickering in an uncertain, invalid state, and the repeated visits of Dr. Grimes, and the efficacy of his compounds, appeared to fail in producing a more beneficial condition of health in his patient.

By the row of witch elms, however, rearing their waving tops not far from the border of the lake where Leonard and Blackthorn used to gambol in bygone times, both Clara and Mrs. Somerset might be often seen sitting on the greensward watching either the leaps of the fish springing at the ephemera, or the fleet-winged swallow dipping his pinions in his flight. It was a quiet, retired spot in which few sounds of the busy world came to break the silence of the scene, and save the wild bee's hum, the grasshopper's chirp, and the hoarse croak of the toad, crouched in his bed of rushes, there was little else to disturb the reign of perfect silence.

It was a sultry summer's day, and beneath the cool shade of the adjacent trees, sending their dimpling shade over the bosom of the water, sat Mrs. Somerset and Clara. The former was occupied in perusing a book,

while the eyes of the latter were earnestly turned towards the Oaks, where its tall crooked chimneys were just visible among the thick foliage which surrounded the old mansion.

“How late Leonard is to-day, Mamma,” observed she with her red lips verging to that shape commonly known as pouting. “He is generally here much earlier than this.”

“Perhaps,” replied her mother without lifting her eyes from the volume, “his studies detain him longer than usual.”

“Oh those dreadful studies!” exclaimed Clara, bringing her hands together. “They haunt poor Leonard and make him look so sad and thoughtful.”

“Does he complain to you of their hardship?” said Mrs. Somerset, closing the book with a gentle movement.

“Not now,” rejoined Clara. “Indeed he

seldom speaks upon any subject, but walks with me often for hours together without saying a word, and looks as if in a wakeful dream."

"Is he then grown so very silent?" asked her mother with a slight smile and inquiring gaze.

"He could scarcely be more so," rejoined Clara, "had he lost the power of speech."

"And think you his books so monopolize his thoughts," returned Mrs. Somerset, banteringly, "that they exclude all other subjects?"

"I suppose so," added Clara, feeling a warm blush mantling itself upon her cheeks.

"Nay, nay, Clara," said her mother, raising a finger as if playfully chiding the doubtful response. "There's a secret in those words."

"Believe me, Mamma," observed Clara, "that I would not—could not keep a secret from you."

"And yet you would let me be at pains of making the discovery myself," Mrs. Somerset, playfully.

At this juncture Leonard Wood approaching form caught Clara's attention and with an exclamation of delight sprang upon her feet and hastened to him.

"How is it that you play laggard morning?" asked she, holding out a hand and greeting him warmly.

"You would not accuse me of that, Clara," replied Leonard, "if you knew what pleasure I came the moment I could get away from my tormentor."

"Does the doctor still continue to be an ogre that he was?" inquired she archly.

"And increasing in size daily," replied

Leonard, smiling, "as he does in hideousness."

"Well, well!" rejoined Clara, yielding an arm which he drew through his own, and fondly pressed her to his side, "we must not speak of him now. This is a time for happy thoughts and not for horrors."

"He has seldom been from my thoughts for many a day," returned the boy, turning a melancholy gaze upon his companion, "and," continued he with a deep heart-drawn sigh, "I fear, never will be."

Clara now perceived the deeply-lined and blanched features which followed this observation, and there was a wild, glassy expression about his eyes which quite startled her.

"Are you unwell, Leonard?" asked she, stopping and bending a look of mingled anxiety and alarm upon him.

"No," he replied, drawing his hand across

his brow, "I think not, although my brow is somewhat heavy to-day, and I start at my own shadow."

They had now arrived where Somerset was sitting, and she expressed involuntary surprise upon seeing Leo's strangely altered appearance.

"Doctor Starkie has been very impatient this morning," said he, "the more he became so, the less capable I am of understanding what he said. He threatened two or three times to fetch his father, he at length did so, and completed my inattention, as he called it, I severely scolded, and at last—" he hesitated to complete the sentence, but the quiver of his lip and averted face told the rest.

"No, no," exclaimed Mrs. Somerset, "I am far from the ground with far greater emotion than she appeared capable of exhibiting; placing an arm affectionately on his shoulder."

Leonard's neck, "tell me not that! They did not—could not strike you!"

"'Twas done in haste," responded the boy, as two large tears rose to course themselves down his cheeks; "but it was a heavy, cruel blow."

A shrill, piercing cry now broke from Clara's lips, and, falling upon her mother's bosom, she wept as if her young heart would break.

"I am not hurt," said Leonard, eagerly, "at least but very little. Do not pain me thus, dear Clara, by giving way to groundless grief."

"Come, come," added Mrs. Somerset, soothingly, "you hear what Leonard says."

"To strike him!" sobbed the girl with choking voice. "How could a hand be raised against one so gentle and so good!"

"You must not praise me, Clara," returned he, dividing the curls upon her brow,

and pressing his lips to it imprinted a brief and loving kiss. "Remember," continued he, "that my mother cautioned you against doing so, as she said it made me vain."

"And where is Alice?" asked Mr. Somerset. "I hoped that she would be with you."

"I fear," responded Leonard, dejectedly, "that she will not join us to-day."

"Was she a witness to the deed of violence?" inquired Mrs. Somerset anxiously.

"She heard all that passed, I think," replied he, "although I uttered no cry nor even murmur."

"May Heaven have mercy on a mother's heart!" fervently ejaculated Mr. Somerset.

As if by common consent, the painful subject of discussion was now dropped, and the three strolled in silence along the margin

of the lake, and Leonard gathered the wild flowers, growing in profusion around, to present in bouquets to Clara.

The principal tributary to the fine mirror-like sheet of water was a narrow and quick-running stream, flanked by alders, which wound a serpentine course through a valley of the greatest beauty. Sloping hills dotted by clumps of thorns and capped by trees of the growth of centuries, swept themselves in gradual declivities to the current's edge, where it broke noisily over a bed of pebbles, and lashed root and stone, and foamed and whirled along, as if in anger at the impediments to its course.

Not far from the mouth of the lake where the stream bubbled from the shallows and glided into deep black water, Corporal Crump's form was detected as he stood whipping an artificial fly lightly over the surface. Adroitly the old soldier handled

his pliant pole, and notwithstanding low and thick branches drooping around, sent the line flying between them with touching a twig.

So occupied was the corporal with essay at the gentle craft, that, unaddressed by Leonard Woodbee, he remained unconscious of any one's approach.

"Have you been successful with your sport?" inquired he.

"Oh!" exclaimed Corporal Crump, dropping his hazel rod and making an ordinary soldier-like salute, "taken by surprise in rear, eh, Sir?"

"A march is not often stolen upon you," observed Mrs. Somerset, smiling.

"Why, no, my Lady!" replied the veteran reflectively. "I've seen a little too much service," continued he, "to be frequently taken a-back or be caught dozing at post."

"How many fish have you caught to-day?" asked Clara.

"Three brace and a half of as nice trout as you could wish to see," returned the corporal, opening the creel, and exposing to view the fish spread on a layer of fresh-pulled rushes. "But to take trout handsomely," continued he, "we should borrow a leaf from the devil's book, and do as he does with us poor miserable sinners."

"The devil's book!" repeated Leonard. "Why so, Corporal?"

"He has the most tempting lures for all times and seasons, tastes and stomachs, Sir," replied the old soldier, "and there's no fishing superior to this. There are few of us so wary but can be caught with some particular favourite sin, and it's the strength of a regiment to a wooden leg, that *this* is the bait which covers his hook."

"Temptation—"

“Is like this May fly, my Lady,” added the corporal, exhibiting the rough representation of the gay-winged insect fabricated upon a hook. “It looks real, and, for its kind, substantial enough; but let but a trout snap at the hackles and feathers, and he’ll find, like us poor miserable sinners when bobbing at a bit of gold or gammon, what it is to be caught by appearances.”

“That it’s too late to profit by the lesson,” replied Mrs. Somerset.

“There is the tun in which our bolts of sorrow and disappointment are shot, my Lady!” rejoined the veteran, shaking his head. “Too late; our lessons are all learned too late! We know that we’re wrong when the hook is in.”

“I begin to think with Mr. Giles,” said Clara with a smile, “that Corporal Crump would be as successful in the hood and

cassock as he has proved himself to be in a uniform of a different character."

"If I were a teacher o' the truth, Miss Clara," replied the old soldier, putting the May fly into shape, and preparing for another throw, "I'd make it a point to set an example, and prove by my living as well as my preaching that I supported the argument. It's easy enough to tell our neighbours what they should do, and what they should *not* do," continued he with emphasis, "but leading the way, and *showing* that you're in earnest, is paint of another colour."

As the sentence was concluded he whipped his fly with an expert cast over the water, so that it seemed to flutter as it fell where a few air bubbles had just risen, and immediately afterwards the whish-sh of the reel, as the line flew from it, announced that it had been a successful one.

"It's a fish worth having this time," said Leonard, interested in the sport.

"Ay, Sir," responded the corporal, "by the pull he gives he'll sink the scale with a three pound weight."

For some minutes he played the fish with both skill and patience till, at length, exhausted with its efforts, up came the captive to the surface of the water, exhibiting a speckled and silver side of great attraction for an epicurean eye. Again, however, he sought the depths where the green rush springs, and it still seemed doubtful whether an escape would not be effected, when Leonard, instructed by the corporal, took the landing net, which rested against the trunk of an adjoining alder, and, as the trout made a second appearance, held the mesh so that it was drawn gradually into it.

“There,” said Corporal Crump exultingly, “we’ve got him safe at last.”

“And I’ll have you safe, you poaching rascal!” hallooed a voice from the opposite side of the stream, and, upon looking up, the whole party found themselves confronted by the angry and threatening visage of Squire Woodbee.

“I beg your pardon, Sir,” said the old soldier, raising a hand to his brow, “but—”

“I gave him leave to fish, Papa,” interrupted Leonard quickly, “but I would not have done so, had I known you would have objected.”

“You gave him leave, Sir?” rejoined Squire Woodbee, with a brow like a thunder cloud. “And by what right do you presume to exercise such an authority?”

“I thought,” pleaded the abashed boy, “that there was no harm in my doing so. The corporal,” continued he, by way of a

palliative, "is always very generous with what he catches."

"Generous with what he catches!" repeated his irate father. "Really I'm infinitely obliged to your friend, Sir, as I suppose I must regard him, for being liberal with what does not belong to him. And pray may I ask if those, too," said he, pointing to Mrs. Somerset and Clara, "are trespassers on my property by your leave and license?"

Mrs. Somerset, whose features were hidden by a thick veil of black crape, made a low and graceful courtesy at the completion of the sentence, and taking Clara by the hand led her away.

"They are a lady and her daughter, friends of my mother," replied Leonard, "living in the village, and occasionally walk here with her and me."

"Oh indeed!" rejoined the Squire, by no

means appeased with the information. "I was not aware of your possessing clandestine acquaintances. Thank you for the information."

"You'll not be angry with either him or us, Sir, I hope," said Corporal Crump, baring his venerable cauliflower head. "If we've done wrong, why the best of Christians are not always in the right, and take the word of an old soldier, no offence was meant."

"I've nothing to do with what was meant," returned Squire Woodbee. "I found you fishing in my trout stream, *that's* poaching. I found those persons," continued he, pointing to Mrs. Somerset and Clara retreating from the vicinity, "walking where there is no path, upon my property; *that's* trespassing. The law defines these offences by these titles, and provides adequate punishment for the perpetrating of them. Had it not been for my son's un-

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warrantable interference I would have put it in force against all with the utmost rigour; as it is, begone and never let me see ye here again."

Corporal Crump made no reply; but keeping a steady eye fixed on Squire Woodbee, who seemed to quail beneath the keen, penetrating glance, slowly replaced his hat, shouldered his rod, and strode away.

CHAPTER XIX.

EVERYBODY knew Miss Baxter; Miss Elizabeth Christina Baxter. Not to know that small, spare, and, indeed, lean Samaritan who, with a roll of music, book, or basket in hand, trotted with a kind of pigeon's run from house to house, wherein young ideas had to be duly trained and cultured, would be proof complete of a most limited acquaintance with the inhabitants of Grundy's Green and its vicinity. It mattered not what the weather was, or what the season, Miss Elizabeth Christina

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Baxter might be seen trudging through heat and cold, dust and mire, snow, and rain in perfect defiance of the elements. And such was the good humour and brightness of spirit sparkling within that bosom like rock crystal in the sun, albeit bereft of every youthful charm, that let the summer's scorching rays bring globes of perspiration upon her brow, or the keen and nipping winter's wind turn the tip of that pointed nose into the hue of a ripe mulberry, there was always a smile upon Miss Baxter's countenance, a smile of contentment, peace and charity.

All loved the old governess. Even the dulllest of comprehension, struggling with the gigantic difficulties of the multiplication table, flattened their noses against the windows and peeped for her coming with the smallest dread. If a lesson was

learned, Miss Baxter praised the accomplishment of the task in the most liberal manner that can possibly be conceived, and if a failure took place, however decided, there was a method in her chiding which seemed quite pleasant to receive. A hope, a strong and powerful hope, that a second and more energetic attempt would prove triumphant, invariably accompanied the correction, and examples were selected of the exalted positions those held in her affections, who did their duty with satisfaction in common to the teacher and the taught.

A model of a governess was Miss Baxter. Patient and reconciled to her lot, she performed her daily work for her daily bread, and notwithstanding the dire difficulties which often vexed and sorely troubled her in—to use a conventional phrase—“making ends meet,” she was never known to murmur, although poverty was no

stranger to the little decayed gentlewoman's home.

For Miss Elizabeth Christina Baxter was well born, well educated, and once possessed both the comforts and luxuries of life; but the storm came when least expected, and the merchant's daughter, flattered and caressed by the rich and titled, was forgotten, as if she had never been, when one hapless day men shrugged their shoulders on the Exchange and whispered "bankrupt."

She was young then, full of hope and dreams of future happiness, a light-hearted, merry girl. The scene was changed, and the merchant's heiress, the child of him whose wealth commanded the adulation of fawning thousands, became dependent upon her own labours to avoid the more fearful alternative of a pauper's refuge.

Such is life.

The striking features both of Miss Baxter and her establishment were their limitations. Not only, as before has been remarked, was her own person upon a small scale; but everything around, about, and in her possession corresponded as by exact and proportionate admeasurement. Her house consisted of two rooms, as the landlord facetiously called them, although cupboards would have been far more appropriate appellations for the apartments, and the garden, abutting on the highway, comprised full six square feet of ground, irrespectively of the path, occupying quite four in addition. It was, however, with considerable interest that Miss Baxter watched the annual reappearance of a solitary bachelor crocus, which reared its saffron head from the patch of black mould, in front of her portal, to tell her that spring was coming, and she cherished a fondness for the stumpy

of which would comprised in the ex-
ference of thirty-six liberal inches.
never looked in a thriving state, but
sionally threw forth a few sickly
leaves to wither, fade, and fall, and
wavering alternately between antici-
death and unlooked-for resuscitation,
Miss Baxter's floricultural affections i
opposite condition to that of a somnol
one.

Within, as without, everything pertain-
to the household was small, very small.
West Indian planter's hat would have
tinguished the table on which Miss
beth Christina took her diurnal meals.

be enjoyed upon their comfortless proportions.

Everything pertaining to the household was small, very small.

A little kettle hissed and spluttered, like an ill-conditioned critic, upon a stove holding but a pinch of coals when piled to the topmost bar, and the poker was not bigger than the skewer one sometimes sees in a round of boiled beef. In a closet which, it is superfluous to say, was close at hand, a few culinary articles were arranged, and appeared to have been originally constructed for some popular pigmy. A mutton chop would have more than covered the gridiron, and a muffin must have been squeezed into the frying-pan. Even the teapot was small, very small; and that is saying something for the self-denial of an old maid of sixty-one who, if she felt an approximation to the pleasure which may be derived from

the stimulating influence of the cup, it was in the temperate one of a cup of tea, far from strong and under sugared.

It was not a habit of Miss Elizabeth Christina Baxter to let the gloom of anticipated evils cast their shadows around her; but as she sat one evening by her own fire-side watching the faces, figures, and quaint shapes of things, neither celestial nor terrestrial, which ever and anon became visible over the burning coals, a fear of something about to happen, an undefined dread stole through her system with the chilling effect of cold water trickling down the centre of the back.

And who has not felt the same foreboding, the same mysterious, inexplicable communing of the future with the present? Linking the unreal with the real, how are phantoms the harbingers of the event.

It was strange, very strange, at least

thought Miss Baxter, as with an involuntary shudder she seized the skewer, and poked the fire into a blaze, which throwing forth a clear cheerful light, brought her countenance upon the canvass, as it were, like a picture just scrubbed.

Time works great changes in beauty's pencillings, and frequently not a trace remains of what has been. This was not, however, the case with Miss Elizabeth Christina Baxter. If her cheek no longer wore the bloom of youth, and furrows lined them, there was still that left which told that her glass might once have been consulted with more than usual satisfaction. Her features, delicately moulded, appeared never to have been ruffled by contending passions, or those fierce feelings which put indelible seals upon them, and they still wore the mild expression of a happy, gentle child.

The neatness of Miss Baxter's costume,

both generally and particularly, was proverbial. "As neat as Miss Baxter," became a local simile of long standing, and difficult indeed would it have been for any one to have surpassed her. Her hair, frosted by chinchilla tints, was worn in two straight bands, and a bowless cap, fringed with the paragon of lace borders, worked by her own hands, formed a perfect antithesis to Mistress Twigg's. There was nothing jaunty about Miss Baxter's cap. It sat upon her head as close as wax, and looked as much a part and parcel of it as its natural skin. Prim it might have been, and with the supporting evidence probably a waste of time to struggle against the objection; but what could be smoother, and in more perfect order, than the network and ruffles which encompassed her neck and throat? And then the high-cut, long-waisted dress—always of a sombre colour, had no rival

pattern in, near, or about Grundy's Green. Its originality was undisputed, and the Baxterian style remained by itself, alone.

Unlike old maids, who are somewhat irreverently spoken of by the ribald tongue of "the post horse rumour," Miss Elizabeth Christina Baxter kept no cat, neither did she delight in scandal, gossip, cordials, or other kinds of stimulants. In speaking of her neighbours, she appeared to have an excellent memory for their virtues but none for their failings, and thus it was that the even tenor of her life passed and glided on.

There were some frightful faces in the coals, and all seemed to be grinning at Miss Baxter, as she endeavoured in vain to dispel the cloud which hung gloomily upon her spirits. At other times, solitary as her condition might be considered, she would not have sprung like a shuttle-cock from

the stroke of the battledore, as a slight rap gave notice of some one being just on the outside of the threshold of her door; but as the knock for admission was delivered, her person gave a convulsive bound from the cane-bottomed chair of which it seemed scarcely capable.

“Who is there?” said Miss Baxter, placing her right hand on her left side and panting as if a severe race had been brought to a finish with no time for the recovery of breath. “Who is ~~there~~, I say?” and she placed an ear to the key-hole of the door with evident trepidation.

“Let me in,” replied a soft, plaintive voice, and, as soon as the words were spoken, bolt and lock flew back to the touch of Miss Baxter’s nimble fingers, and Mrs. Woodbee, entering the cottage, tottered forward and sank in an exhausted condition upon the nearest seat.

"What—tell me what has happened?" ejaculated Miss Baxter, clasping Mrs. Woodbee's hands between her own, and bending over her with the deepest solicitude.

"A moment," replied Mrs. Woodbee, faintly, "and I will tell you all, and were it not for one," continued she, raising her eyes, "one whom I could not leave willingly on earth even for heaven itself, would that when told my last words were spoken!"

"Speak not so," rejoined Miss Baxter, drawing a chair by the side of her friend.

"Your words wring my very heart."

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Woodbee, deeply.

"Thousands of hearts are daily wrung, and each, to its possessor, seems more tortured than the rest. But mine—a mother's heart—racked through witnessing the broken health and wasting energies of her child; to see him tremble at his own thoughts, and mark the anxious dread blanching his once

ruddy cheek and happy face, is woe which a mother can only feel. If it pleased Him," continued she, "who directs all things for all-wise purposes, to have smitten my boy with fell disease, and taken him from me, to have murmured would have been but mortal; but to see his young heart dying within him, to kill him before my eyes by a death so cruel, is"—and bursting into tears she could say no more.

Sympathising with her friend to the fullest extent, Miss Baxter exercised the most persuasive language at her command, to assuage the grief which overwhelmed Mrs. Woodbee; but all she could say appeared to produce but little effect.

"In the forms of men," resumed the sorrowing mother, "devils are sometimes to be met with, and if ever one existed in the shape of man, more cruel, treacherous, and remorseless than another, it is that

demon, Dr. Starkie, poor Leonard's tutor.'

"The wretch!" exclaimed Miss Baxter. "But he will get his deserts, dear Madam, Yes, yes; we shall yet see him with a proportionate reward for his iniquities."

"Poor consolation that to me," returned her companion, dejectedly. "What I would do, is to check or stop them, and this is the object of my seeking you to-night. You always loved your little pupil?"

"Fondly," rejoined Miss Baxter with enthusiasm, "and am prepared, if necessary to walk over red-hot ploughshares to serve him."

"The ordeal I am about asking you to undergo," said Mrs. Woodbee, rallying slightly from her depression, "is not so severe as that; but still one which will sorely test your nerves, I fear."

"No matter," replied Miss Baxter, with

a courageous demeanour amounting to recklessness, "I'm prepared for anything."

"For some time past," continued her companion, "I have felt convinced that Doctor Starkie has some object to serve in the treatment to which he subjects my son; but what that is, remains beyond my powers of penetration to discover. To me he is all profession of kindness and consideration; and regrets the discipline necessary—as he says—for the development of his mental powers. This, however, is but a mask to conceal a design of which I am ignorant.—He knows, as well as myself, that so far from acquiring knowledge, his mind, like his poor attenuated frame, is becoming hourly impaired, and unless a change, a total and speedy change, takes place in the harsh conduct which is so constantly observed towards him, instead of the scholar loaded with honors we shall have—an idiot."

"Heaven have mercy on us!" exclaimed Miss Baxter. "What can be done to avert such misery?"

"I say," resumed Mrs. Woodbee, without heeding the remark, "that Doctor Starkie knows this as well as I do, and yet he continues, from day to day, to pursue the same unrelenting course. My husband, blind to the consequences, and his thoughts wrapped in the vision of seeing his son a great and distinguished man, perceives nothing but the effects of mental labour, and sternly forbids my slightest interference; but with you, perhaps, he may be more patient. He will listen"—

"He *shall* listen," interrupted Miss Baxter. "I'll tell him to his face that he's a brute."

"Nay, nay," rejoined Mrs. Woodbee, smiling, "such a beginning, I fear, would not lead to a desirable end. You must control your feelings, and lead him rather

by persuasive reasoning, than that of the opposite character. Tell him—as he cannot but believe—that, seeing so great a sad an alteration in your late pupil, you are led, from the most disinterested of motives, to represent the great injury which may be the result of the present system of”-

“Barbarous cruelty, becoming only a savage cannibals,” added Miss Baxter. “That is the truth, and it does me good to speak it.”

“I begin to fear that your advocacy returned Mrs. Woodbee, “would not further the cause.”

“Don’t be afraid of my want of discretion,” said Miss Baxter. “In the presence of Bluebeard; pardon me,” continued she, taking one of her companion’s hands between her own, “but, save in your presence, always call Mr. Woodbee Bluebeard—I say not a word which might offend him. Whatever my inclination may be to speak

exceedingly plain and to the purpose, I must think of the object only, and the most expedient method of attaining it."

"You will undertake, then, to see my husband?" inquired Mrs. Woodbee.

"Afraid as one naturally must be of any one, or anything exceedingly fierce," replied Miss Baxter, "I will most assuredly confront Mr. Bluebeard at an early hour in the morning. He may feel inclined to cut my head off," continued she, closing her eyes with resignation, "but he will confine his feelings to these limits, I've no doubt."

During this conference, the only light in the apartment was that rendered by the fire, which, being neglected, threw but a dull, leaden one around, making "darkness visible." The moon now broke from between a heavy bank of clouds, and shining brightly forth, brought bright shadows from without, and streaked them in fantastic shapes upon

the walls. Among them, distinct and palpable, was that of a man in a stooping attitude, with a hand raised as if to catch the slightest sound, or as an indication of his riveted attention.

“Look!” exclaimed Mrs. Woodbee, pointing to the reflection. “What is that?”

“What is that?” repeated Miss Baxter, in a tone of indignation, as she seized the skewer of a poker, and flourished it above her head. “*That*,” continued she, loudly, so as to convey due notice of her advent, “is the shadow of some paltry, mean, and contemptible eaves-dropper listening at the keyhole of my door. If not off before I open it, I will try what stout iron will do upon the substance.”

As these words were delivered during Miss Baxter’s approach towards the door, the shadow gradually glided from the wall, and before it was thrown back upon its

hinges, it had vanished, and left no trace behind.

"Stand forth!" cried Miss Baxter, "whoever you are," and she pitched her voice in a shrill key. "Let me, at least, know the basest of mankind;" but if truth must be told, there was little desire for an immediate introduction to the basest of mankind. Like many a bolder heart, Miss Baxter's had a steadier pulse when danger appeared in the perspective.

"I may be wrong," remarked Mrs. Woodbee, nervously; "but I think—I think that our conversation has been overheard by—"

"The basest of mankind," added Miss Baxter at the top of her voice; "of that I feel quite certain, let the individual be who he may."

"No matter," returned Mrs. Woodbee, "my suspicions are, perhaps, ill-founded; but the shadow bore so close a resemblance

to Doctor Starkie, that I cannot but think it was he who was playing eaves-dropper.

"Then he must have watched you on the road, and dogged your footsteps here," rejoined Miss Baxter.

"I'm sure it was him," said Mrs. Wocbee, musingly.

"But what could be his object?" inquired Miss Baxter.

"It is impossible to divine," replied her companion. "There is so much mystery in all he says and does, that I almost dread to think of him."

"Well, well," ejaculated Miss Baxter. "If it was him, he heard no complimentary remarks concerning himself, and that's highly consoling to me. However," continued she, "to-morrow morning I will call up Mr. Bluebeard, and expostulate with him even if he should threaten to call in the headsman. In the meantime you must

not give way to fear or despondency; but hoping for the best, resist anticipations of evil. I will accompany you on your road homewards, and rely implicitly upon your body guard for that protection which the weak have a right to demand at the hands of the strong and doughty."

And having said that which she believed to be most likely to cheer the spirits of Mrs. Woodbee, Miss Baxter seized her shawl and bonnet, and, with a shake and a pull, completed her toilet, and announced that "she was ready."

END OF VOL. I.



THE
BELLE OF THE VILLAGE.

BY
JOHN MILLS,
AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN," "OUR
COUNTY," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE BELLE OF THE VILLAGE.

CHAPTER I.

ALONE, with his stedfast looks fixed on vacancy, sat Dr. Starkie within the gloomy confines of Leonard's study. The parenthesis was strongly marked, and his inward thoughts appeared to be working to a satisfactory conclusion, for a smile played upon his thin-lined lips, and an expression of pleasurable slyness darted from his eye like a monkey in a devilish mood.

"Love!" said he with a sneer, "there's no

such thing ! The young think that there is, but the old, and those of the world, know that there is not. It is another word for passion, which when satiated consumes itself. The poet was right.

“ ‘ Women are angels, wooing ;

Things won are done ; the soul's joy lies in doing.’

“ But what joy ! ” exclaimed the Oxford double-first prize-man, starting from his chair with a flushed face, and bringing his hands together he wrung them as if the blood would fly from the veins. “ As if our subtle natures,” continued he, rising and pacing with a hasty, noiseless tread about the room, “ were formed to illustrate an anomalism, we most desire that which appears beyond our reach, and the greater the labour in attaining the object, the more appreciable its gratification. Risk, opposition, impediments, and danger, are the fanning causes of man's unwearied energy. Without them h—

mind would be like the fire in the flint wanting the agency of steel."

The doctor paused here, and stood mutely biting his lips with a knitted and contracted brow.

"If we are free agents," resumed he, "how is it that circumstances, not of our own creation, give rise to events which, seemingly the work of chance, control our destiny? Like causes produce like effects. If pricked, we bleed; if tickled, laugh. Sweet sounds please the ear, and beauty inflames the blood. Ay," repeated he between his clenched teeth, "beauty inflames the blood!" and he again clasped his hands and pressed them with the force of one labouring under intensity of feeling.

"What if she be another's wife?" continued he, and a sneer curled his upper lip. "It was not by my consent that she became his. I had no hand in the arrangement,

neither was it by my seeking that we met.

“Inanimate things are attracted by inscrutable influences, as the needle by the magnet. Matter holds together by the cohesion of atoms. If then the laws of nature thus govern the material, why should not the immaterial be under the same dictation? The physical is but a machine; our pulse beats, our blood circulates; respiring lungs perform their offices, and all belonging to the frame act without our will or instrumentality. Is it, therefore, unreasonable to conjecture that our ideas, passions, and sensibilities of every kind, frequently under the direct influences of the transient state and condition of the body, should be also governed by the same secret and impenetrable power? Who can check the impression creating the thought? Who control the thought leading to the volition? What, then, are the actions of men

but the effects of causes neither of their own creation, choice, nor command?

“Free Agents!

“A feather blown in the hurricane can direct its course as easily as we can ours. Creatures of apparent self-control, and yet without any, we take our allotted course, whether for seeming good or evil, and contribute to the completion of the vast design.

“Mystery of mysteries!”

Doctor Starkie took a long-drawn breath, but appeared still in the mood to soliloquise.

“We love,” continued he, “—to use the conventional term—frequently as we hate, without knowing why. Within ourselves exist the hidden influences dictating those impulses which sway the destinies of all. The king and the peasant may alike be governed by love and hatred, and yet both be unaccountable for their origin. So is it

“Man is an irresponsible being!”

This conclusion appeared to give Oxford double-first prize-man the great satisfaction; for he dropped himself quiescent into his chair, and began playing the detatoo upon one of its arms while he furnished an accompaniment in the most charming manner.

“Man is an irresponsible being,” repeated Doctor Starkie, and the tune became more lively, and he nodded his head to and fro as if keeping the exact measure of the time.

“There are many roads to the same end,” continued he, “and the direct course seldom appears the most crooked. To gain a

from his lips was scarcely audible. "I am not a lady killer," said he, "not one of those whispering, smiling, sneaking knaves who lie like truth, cajole with flattery, and catch woman's rakish heart like boys net butterflies. For such as these the highway is broad and straight, and few miss their game save by accident; but for mine, craft must be exercised."

Footsteps were now heard approaching, and Doctor Starkie, opening a volume, became so absorbed in the page before him that no one would have suspected that he was cognizant of the presence of Leonard and his mother as they entered the room together with one of his hands clasped in hers.

"Doctor Starkie," pleaded a faint voice, "can I—may I speak with you?"

"May you speak with me?" echoed the doctor, starting with feigned surprise, and

closing his book with a jerk. "My dear Madam, pray be seated," and he placed a chair close by the side of his own, and bowed and smiled, and rubbed the backs of his hands, while the parenthesis became most powerfully developed.

Leonard stared with blinkless eyelids at his tormentor's face, and his finger involuntarily pressed those of his mother's closely, as the tutor with an air of fondling kindness, divided the luxuriant curls upon his brow, and smoothed them with a soft and silky touch, as if the last man on earth to ruffle the brain they covered with single thought, dread, or care, was Doctor Starkie.

"A nice boy," said the doctor, dropping himself gently into his seat, "a mother pet if not—if, ah! hem! But we shall improve, yes, yes," and he gave a succession of mild double knocks between his pupils

shoulders. "Diligence and perseverance, my dear Madam," continued he, drawing back the margins of his mouth, "overcome, undermine, top, conquer, and render as nothing difficulties of Alpine structure, and as in rocks of coral, fabricated by some of the most pigmy of nature's architects, we see the end to what small beginnings may give rise."

Mrs. Woodbee sighed.

"Hah!" responded Doctor Starkie, shaking his head, and then he sighed again; but by the bright twinkle in his eyes there was little of sorrow in his breast.

There was a pause, a long and awkward interval which appeared irksome to bear. Mrs. Woodbee sat with an arm encircling the waist of her son, as he stood leaning slightly against her shoulder, as if to avoid a nearer approach to the doctor, while he remained caressing the backs of his

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hands, glancing like a snake ready with its sting.

“It cannot have failed your observation at length said Mrs. Woodbee, drawing a hand across her brow as it throbbed with anguish, “you must have seen almost day by day late,” continued she, “that Leonard’s health,” and the tears rose as she spoke, “more than health, is giving way to the drudgery of his books. I hoped, indeed, from what you said to me on a previous occasion when I made a similar appeal, that the severity of the system would be relaxed, and that the happiness of a mother would find as much consideration with Doctor Starkie as the mistaken, ill-judged pride of a father.”

“You must not rebuke me,” replied the doctor, “pray do not rebuke me, dear Madam,” said he, raising his white hands and placing them gently together in a beseech-

ing form. "If it rested with me, our dear young friend here should roam the fields and—"

"It does rest with you," interrupted Mrs. Woodbee. "Tell my husband that it is necessary, and there will be no opposition to all that I wish."

"I told him what you desired on the last occasion," rejoined the doctor in a sleek, smooth tone; "but he would not consent to the smallest diminution in our labours—I say *our* labours," said he with emphasis, "for the teacher's work is little less arduous than the taught."

"It can be no secret that my desires have little weight with Mr. Woodbee," returned she, sorrowfully, "more particularly as regards our child. What I ask, nay, pray and beseech you, Sir, is, to advocate my views as your own, and then, as you know, all would be well. My boy's cheek would be

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ruddy again, and we should hear his merry laugh ring like a wild bird's song. (How happy it would make me!"

Doctor Starkie rubbed his hands more quickly, and two hectic spots, almost bright and scarlet as drops of blood prick freshly from a vein, presented themselves suddenly in the centre of his cheeks, and spreading as quickly as they came, his face became like one inflamed with wine, and his eyes glistened beneath his shaggy brow with the fierce devil-like fire of unchecked passion.

In a moment—so soon that she even doubted whether it had been done—the hand encircling her son was clutched, and a hot, burning kiss imprinted upon it, a kiss which a demon's lips might have pressed.

Silent—mute with indignation—the incensed wife's looks flashed upon him who had thus insulted her; but he met the

unquailed, and there was the parenthesis as of old, and a set of teeth as white and even as a shark's.

"Not a moment," said Doctor Starkie, turning abruptly to Leonard, "lose not a moment. Get your bat, ball, and kite, to-day I'll be your playfellow."

The boy was bewildered, The ogre to be his playfellow!

"Let Blackthorn come," continued the doctor, springing upon his feet; "oh! but we'll be a right merry company! There, get you gone," and he pushed his gaping Pupil from the room, "and meet me within ten minutes in the park."

They were alone.

"You see how ready I am to make you happy," whispered Doctor Starkie, moving towards Mrs. Woodbee, who had now risen from her chair, and remained looking at him with an expression of mingled fear and

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contemptuous anger. "Henceforth, resumed he, gliding noiselessly forward : shadow upon the wall until he stood beside her, "it shall be my sole study so. I'll turn boy again, and instead of that we'll laugh and play, and make life one broken holiday. Your son shall no longer be the dull-eyed, lifeless, pale-faced student. Trust to me, dearest——*Alice*, again he seized her hand, and held it to his breast.

Had an adder clung to her she could have flung it off with greater loathing. Her curled lip, speechless and quivering, head thrown back, and bosom heaving drew her figure to its height, and fixed eyes upon him as if they would pierce to his dead!

The truth stood revealed. All flashed through her brain with the swiftness of light, and the devilish scheme became

clearly defined as if written in letters of blood on driven snow.

He blanched beneath the haughty, angry glance; but yet felt no wavering of purpose. His object was fixed, and neither the hopes of heaven nor terrors of hell would have turned him from it.

"Miscreant!" saluted his ears, "let me pass."

And she passed, still bending upon him that look which more effectually silenced him than the most bitter reproaches which words could express.

"She at least knows my terms," observed he, and he took a long-drawn breath as if her departure had afforded him considerable relief.

CHAPTER II.

THERE is scarcely sufficient interest perhaps, in relating the details of the progressive rise of Corporal Crump to the dignity of President of the Rollicki Club. From associate to member, and from member to the supreme head, were steps which the old soldier took with great confidence, ease, and success.

With regard to the express objects and views of the association, nothing appears clearly defined, neither are the particular duties of the president subjects of record.

All that may be said to be indisputable, is that to be as comfortable as possible was a standard rule of the Rollicking Club, and if any one chose to persist in violating it by declining to be merry when he should, or preventing his fellow members from enjoying themselves by act or deed, gesture, look, hint, word, or whisper, be the offence one of either commission or omission, he subjected himself to instant expulsion by a well-known and most summary process of ejection.

The president, too, possessed the absolute power of an autocrat, in being listened to without interruption whenever he thought proper to call the attention of his companions to what he was about to enlighten them upon, and he had but to give the talismanic number of three knocks, and call "order," to subdue the wildest commotion, and most uproarious mirth.

It was a great, a grand sight, a sight worth beholding, to see Corporal Crum performing the office of president to the Rollicking Club. Blending the firmness of one sensible of the responsibilities of office with that suavity of manner so winning to the flattered sensibilities, the old soldier held a sway and dominion which might be copied with advantage by many occupying loftier chairs of authority. Without a taint of haughtiness in his demeanour, he maintained a bearing which forbade all description of liberties, and the smallest encroachment in this particular met with a check of the most decided nature.

The incident is trifling, but it may be mentioned as one of the simplest kind, that upon the installation of Corporal Crum to his honorary office, he noticed that the official seat was without a cushion, and peremptorily required that one should be

furnished with as little delay as possible.

And there sat the corporal, at the head of that goodly company, in the club room at the Harrow and Pitchfork, faced by the vice-president, James Burly, knight of the muscles, and flanked on each side by long rows of passed and expectant presidents, vice-presidents, members, and associates. The mahogany table before them shone like burnished silver, and requited the care which Mistress Twigg bestowed upon that article of furniture; and the glasses and vessels containing different kinds of beverages, from the crystal fluid pumped from the depths of a neighbouring well, to the fiery decoctions from home-grown berry and foreign grape, did equal justice to that excellent housewife's skill and attention.

To an unaccustomed tread the sensation might not be so pleasant on that sanded

floor as upon the velvet texture of Persian carpet; but the glow of light thrown from the crackling ashen faggots blazing upon the hearth, at the corporal's back, together with the liberal display of candles in a wide hoop, suspended above the heads of the assembly, gave so undeniable an effect of perfect cheerfulness, that that taste must have been more than ordinarily fastidious, to have heeded the objection more than as a fleeting one of the most fleeting kind.

The evening was advancing, and with a perceptible increase of that good humour and conviviality, to which the old soldier's tact and unexceptionable management mainly contributed. Toasts of the most loyal description had been drunk with a demonstration of enthusiasm scarcely within the limits of description. Sentiments had been given of a truly erudi-

character. Songs had been sung, jokes **cracked**, stories told, and still there were **no** signs of exhaustion in either the **demand** or the supply of each and all.

"Gentlemen," said Corporal Crump, **bringing** his clenched knuckles with considerable force upon the table.

"Or-der," cried Mr. Burly.

"Chair, chair!" responded several voices, among which Jacob Giles's sounded above the rest, for the little general shopkeeper supported the president staunchly, and could not patiently endure that a word should be lost when spoken by the oracle of his existence, Corporal Crump.

"Gentlemen," repeated the corporal, **rising**, and drawing the end of his pipe from his lips, he placed it upon the table as a sign that he was about occupying the attention of his hearers with something more than a mere common-place remark;

“our thoughts often lead us to strange speculations, and I was a-thinking just now, as I took the last whiff of my back~~ing~~, how cool we stand by and witness the losses, pains, and troubles of our neighbours, in comparison with the way in which we view those that befall ourselves.”

“Good,” observed Jacob, “very good ! ”

“It puts one in mind of a dentist drawing teeth,” resumed Corporal Crump; “he smiles, and tugs away as if there was no such thing as feeling; but, let the pincers be put into his jaws, and mark how he’ll writhe.”

“If he’d been a parson born,” said James Burly, in a whisper to a companion on his left hand, “he couldn’t speak more to the pint. Feel o’ that,” continued he in the same tone, as he stretched a leg under the table for a due examination of the hardness of the calf, “there’s muscle ! ”

Corporal Crump, perceiving the inattention on the part of the vice-president, fixed his eyes upon him with a reproachful expression, when that individual withdrew the member, and, placing it under his chair, looked particularly ashamed of himself.

“This reflection on my part,” recommenced Corporal Crump, “was the origin, so to speak, of the sentiment I’m about proposing to you, and which, I’m bold enough to believe, will be received by everybody present with approval and cordiality.”

“Hear, hear,” shouted Jacob Giles. “Let’s have it, Colonel,” continued he, for when the little general shopkeeper had partaken of his third glass of brandy and water, he was sure to promote the corporal to this elevated rank, and he has been known, after a fourth, to elevate him to a

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“May we then,” said Corporal Crump, glancing around him, “regard the sorrows of others as our own, and, with heart and hand, try to soothe all we cannot heal.”

“Nothing could be better,” returned Jacob, “and the bulk’s as good as the sample.”

Scarcely had the reception of the sentiment been concluded in a manner most gratifying to the propounder, when the twentieth part of Mistress Twigg’s portly figure became visible to Burly James, as she stood holding the door partly open and making a succession of telegraphic communications, which were either not seen or understood by the person signalled. In vain she dodged to and fro, and beckoned rapidly with a raised fore-finger; but at length, catching the eye of the knight of the muscles, she made known her meaning by significantly pointing to the

President, and vanishing like a spectre at **c**ockcrow.

“I say,” cried Mr. Burly, in the attempt **t**o catch the corporal’s attention, “you’re **w**anted.”

Corporal Crump, however, gave no heed.

“President of the Right Honourable **R**ollickers,” hallooed Burly James, at the **p**itch of his voice, “you’re wanted.”

“Where, and who by, Mister Vice?” in-
quired his superior.

“Fee-male outside,” rejoined Mr. Burly, **j**erking his dexter thumb backwards; and **t**hen, after making a calm survey of the **r**espective countenances of the company, he **c**leared his throat from some imaginary **c**obwebs, and gave a slow, deliberate wink.

“A female outside,” repeated the pre-
sident.

“Widder wants ye,” said the knight of
the muscles. “There, is that enough?”

Some folks want so *much* explanation," added he, and then thinking that he had said something more than ordinarily good, he broke into a violent fit of laughter, which, to his extreme surprise, he was permitted to indulge in without an accompaniment.

Corporal Crump was too gallant an admirer of the fair sex in general, and the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork in particular, to require further intimation of his presence being in demand, and he vacated his chair to seek her who had sought him, without apology for his going.

"Be quick," ejaculated Mistress Twigg, catching hold of the corporal's hand nervously, as he gained the outside of the club-room; "Miss Clara's in the bar-parlour, and looks pale and frightened; but I don't know what's the matter."

Hastening forward with a pulse quickened

by these words, the corporal met Clara in the passage leading to the bar-parlour, who in an agitated tone and manner said, "Come with me, there's not a moment to lose."

"What has happened?" inquired he. "Is my mistress worse?"

"No, no," replied Clara, "thank Heaven! But ask me nothing; all will be explained. Hark, are those the wheels of the coach?"

"Yes," rejoined he, turning his head to the quarter from whence the approaching sounds were heard, "that's the mail coming up."

"Run then," returned Clara, "pray run, or we shall be too late;" and she hurried him along the road amid a labyrinth of perplexities, mingled with fears of coming evil.

CHAPTER III.

THE stars peeped from their azure curtain and looked like pitying spirits upon the struggling things of earth—undying, unfading witnesses of man's guilt and shame, immutable, all-watchful, and ever there.

“A fine night,” hallooed Jonathan, making the whip crack loudly over the heads of his horses, and the high-mettled animals sprang forward as they reached the gentle hill up which they now galloped at a merry pace.

“That's your sort, my Jerry-go-nimble!” responded his solitary companion the Guard.

“ Give ’em their heads; keep ’em moving. We’re all in the light and corky line. Light load, light night, light hearts. Nothing like light hearts, Jonathan, if you want to go the pace.”

“ Do you ever feel yours heavy? ” asked the Coachman, turning his head as well as his layer of shawls and capes would permit.

“ Now and then,” replied the Guard hoarsely, after whistling two or three bars of a particularly cheerful air. “ Indigestion I expect. But hold hard,” continued he, “ what have we here? ”

The horses were checked, and as soon as possible the rapid revolving wheels were brought to a standstill, but not before the coach had passed by many yards the spot where it had been hailed to stop.

“ Is there room? ” inquired a voice.

“ Outside and in, box and boot,” replied the Guard, preparing to make a descent from

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a seat purposely designed as the uneasiest of resting places. "How many?" asked he upon gaining the ground.

"Two insides and one out," was the reply.

"Why blue eyes and buckskin breeches?" exclaimed the Guard, with a shout of merriment, "if here isn't the chap what drinks to the King, Jonathan, with no heel-taps. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that is a good-un!" returned the Coachman. "What, are ye going up with us?" continued he.

"Yes," replied Corporal Crump, most imperfectly covered in one of Jacob Giles's over coats, "I'm an outside passenger to-night."

"Then come alongside o' me," rejoined Jonathan.

"Stay one minute," added the old soldier, "let's see that we are all right here first."

here, Marm," croaked the Guard, 's the step. Lamps dazzle ye I see moth in the candle. Take my arm; it, now young gen'l'm'n if *you* please ler suit. His Majesty's mail, the tide, quarter day recollect, wait for no man, ever they may do for the feminines. as a feather," concluded he, lifting in ard by the side of his mother, and g the door with a sharp jerk.

All right, mate?" said Jonathan, in- gatively, throwing the apron across oral Crump's knees.

s Shrewsbury clock," replied the Guard, ning his seat with an agility of limb a his bulky figure appeared incapable hibiting. "Send her rolling."

rough the clear frosty air, and over the unyielding road, the team flew to the late, and, as if impatient at the delay king up the passengers, seemed resolved

to have a match with Time, and to head him in the race.

"Who are the insides?" asked the Coachman, after steadying the impatient horses and getting them a little more under control of the reins.

"Friends of mine," shortly answered the old soldier. "Nobodys in particular."

"Going the whole way?"

"Yes," replied the Corporal.

"Glad of it," rejoined the Coachman.

"Fond of company."

" 'With spirits gay I mount the box,
My tits up to the traces,
With wrists turned out and elbows squared,
Dash off for Epsom races.'

Got no voice," added the Guard abruptly, breaking off in his song; "but I can blow a bit," and taking his horn from the sheath he gave a twang which might have been heard a mile distant.

"Famous company *he* is," remarked

Nathan, nodding his head in the direction of the occupier of the extreme rear of the mail. "Dark or light, winter or summer, wet or dry, cold or hot, it's all the same with *him*. Never out o' sorts, never out of humour. He's the temper of a sucking ve!"

The corporal, however, made no observation upon this eulogy, and appeared to be entirely engrossed with his own thoughts.

Passed the roadside inn with its sign, new-worn and weather beaten, creaking to and fro, in the wind, and splashing through a shallow stream, crossing the road, where thirsty drovers' dogs stop to lap the cooling draught, and by the tall sign post stretching out its gaunt white arms like a grim specter in the moonlight, and down the slope descended over the flat ground, now between high hedges, throwing dark shades around, and then away through the unbroken flood of

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silvery light, the mail coach continued to lessen mile after mile of its journey.

“ You are silent, mate; down upon your luck; ” remarked the Coachman, who considered that the occupier of the box seat with him, was in duty bound to impart a share of amusement, or information, towards making the night pass agreeably.

“ Am I? ” replied Corporal Crump, with a shake as if the effort to rouse himself was forced in the extreme.

It was evident that the old soldier's spirits were below zero, and present appearances were no way in favour of an immediate rise.

“ I've heard tell,” continued Jonathan, “ that you're a man of words; but I must say, just now, a man of as few as any Christian, amazingly partial to silence, could desire.”

“ Hah ! ” ejaculated the Corporal, gloomily.
“ He who speaks the least often thinks the=

most, and just now, comrade, I've quite enough to do with the latter part of the business."

"Well, well!" rejoined the Coachman. "I've felt myself in the same line before now, and to be disturbed isn't pleasant. So go along, my flowers of May, another mile and *your* work's done."

It is needless to add the concluding portion of Jonathan's address was made to his horses, and whether the distance mentioned fell short of a fair eight furlongs, or the time occupied in accomplishing it was unusually short, is not a matter of the slightest importance in the scale of events; but in the crack of a whip, so to speak, there they were at the end of the stage and before the entrance of the well-known hostelrie the Spit and Chicken.

"Change here," said Jonathan, unbuckling the reins and throwing them over the

wheelers' backs, "and if you'll take my advice," continued he, speaking to Corporal Crump in the most earnest manner, "the advice of a man who's been up an' down this very identical road nightly for seventeen year an' up'ards, you'll try what half a pint of purl will do. It's made inside here accordin' to my mate's notions of what purl *should* be, and he's not a likely bird to mistake chaff for corn, I assure ye. It makes *me* dream of heaven; that's all."

"Thank ye kindly, comrade," replied the Corporal. "The advice is well meant, I know. But first of all tell me do you hear—hear anything coming after us?"

"Anything coming after us?" repeated the Coachman, as if weighing each syllable.

"Ay," rejoined Corporal Crump in a confused tone and manner, "wheels, horse, anything?"

"Wind sets this way," returned Jonathan

as if communing with himself, "road's hard as nails, air's frosty. No," continued he, listening attentively, "nothing that goes on iron is within two good miles, I'll be sworn."

This information seemed to afford considerable relief to the corporal, for he assumed, on the instant, a manner of greater cheerfulness, and descending from his elevated position, opened the coach door, and, thrusting in his head, communicated it in the coachman's own words.

"There was nothing that went on iron within two good miles, that he'd be sworn."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodbee, but her words were almost choked with sobs, and she drew her sleeping boy in silence closer to her breast, and nestled him fondly in her arms.

Corporal Crump whispered a few words of comfort to the forlorn and sorrow-

stricken creature; hurrying, she knew nowhere, and cared not whither, but anywhere so long as increasing distance was placed between her and the roof she had left in the madness of despair.

He said but little, for the old soldier knew full well that her grief was beyond his reach, and, closing the door gently, he turned upon his heel, and met the attentive Jonathan, bearing in his hand a cup of that lauded cordial which caused his visions of celestial happiness.

"To give it a fair chance," said the Coachman, critically, "you should sip it, not swallowed in a hurry; but we haven't much time to spare, so down with it, and if ye don't feel a glow in the frog of your feet before the fiercest fire could scorch a feather, say I'm a nightmare, or something quite as heavy, and not nearly so pleasant."

"Lor' love ye," chimed in the Guard, "You'll feel so springy presently, that I shouldn't be surprised but you'll try to make a fly of it, like one o' them little cherrybums we sometimes see on church winders, all heads and wings, and nothin' to sit upon. But come, Jonathan, we musn't hang fire any longer. Up wi' ye, lad, and set 'em going."

"Look alive and let 'em go," cried the Coachman, and before Corporal Crump had settled himself firmly in his seat, the coach was again in rapid motion.

It might be, as was anticipated, the effect of the purl, but whatever the cause, the corporal's spirits rose quickly, and he became almost as voluble as he had been taciturn.

"I thought how it would be," remarked Jonathan. "You feel better, don't ye?"

Corporal Crump admitted that there was

a perceptible improvement in his sensations, and expressed a belief that if the dose was repeated at the first convenient opportunity, he should be himself again.

The coachman turned these words over two or three times to himself, and began to suspect that there was something of "the old soldier" in them

CHAPTER IV.

SQUIRE WOODBEE stood with his back to the fire, with one hand separating the skirts of his coat, and the other occupied in swinging a heavy bunch of gold seals, attached to a corresponding massive gold chain. Dressed with scrupulous care, he looked, as usual, most respectable ; but from the black lowering of his brow, and the compressed condition of his lips, something had evidently put in agitation those sensitive meshes of nerves, the effect of which is generally comprised in the words "bad temper."

Squire Woodbee might be pronounced to be in an exceedingly bad temper.

And well he might be, too. In the morning, scarcely had his chin settled itself in the folds of his cravat for the day, when Miss Baxter pioneered her way into his presence, in spite of the powdered-headed lacquey's assuring her, with a dismayed countenance, "that it was more than his situation was worth to let her in." In *she would* come, she said so, and she meant it, and had not that powdered-headed lacquey backed before her, with more than convenient expedition, the historian might have had to record a pugilistic feat of no common order.

Having made her way into the breakfast room, and ruffled, perhaps, by the opposition offered in her passage thither, Miss Baxter announced, somewhat abruptly, that "she had not come for nothing."

The proprietor of the Oaks, and lord of the manors thereunto belonging, was as astonished and astounded as any gentleman of such centralization, in his own household and neighbourhood, can possibly be conceived. In the act—for it is well to be particular—of sipping a cup of chocolate alone, he stared in mute surprise behind the curling vapour saluting his olfactory organs, at what he almost suspected to be a deception of his senses; a myth.

Miss Baxter, unannounced, uncalled for, unauthorized, and yet to be there in open defiance of his imperious mandate *not* to approach either him or his establishment, or hold communication with anybody comprised under that general head, as a being so volatile and frivolous, and whose influence might possibly be prejudicial to the full developement of those plans now being carried out with so much active rigour for

Leonard's mental culture. And yet to ~~be~~ there, with the avowed declaration of n. — coming for nothing.

Tobias Woodbee took a long-drawn breath, and fixed such a look upon Miss Christina Baxter, that he expected to see her at once sink, and shut up like a telescope. So far, however, from that being the case, she appeared to draw out a little, and returned look for look, without so much as the blink of an eyelid.

“I came Mister—” she almost said Bluebeard, but correcting herself in time, added, “Woodbee, with no intention of giving you offence, but the rudeness of your servant has caused my entrance, perhaps, to be less ceremonious than it otherwise should have been. I am here, however, for the purpose of serving you, and if an intrusion, believe me, the end to be at-

tained fully justifies the slight infringement upon your privacy."

Tobias Woodbee listened, or appeared to do so, but said not a word.

Miss Christina Baxter began to entertain a few slight flickerings of hope that her elocutionary powers were producing a desirable effect, and had Bluebeard forthwith invited her to occupy a chair, she would not have felt overpowered with astonishment. He did not, however, go to this extent, and the little, lean Samaritan remained on her legs, like Brutus addressing the conscript fathers.

"Mister Woodbee," resumed Miss Christina, placing her hands together in a pleading form, "a mother, Sir, possesses an ideal world in the love for her child. Nothing extinguishes her devotion for it, not even time, while living, nor the grave when dead. When lost to her. memory still re-

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calls its lisping prattle, and the smile, the first, perhaps, which greeted her, as with upturned face it slumbered peacefully upon her bosom, remains for ever in her heart. Oh, Sir, a mother's love is the holiest of human affections, and to wound it the cruellest of tortures."

The Squire maintained a fixed, cold stare; but a slight flushed line across his forehead announced that Miss Baxter's words were not without point, and he was pricked more deeply, withal, than he would have had her suppose, for a good round sum.

"In this life," resumed Miss Christina Baxter, "how few of our joys cast bright rays upon the future, or bear reflection upon the past. Our fallen state forbids that we should be otherwise than sorrowful; and yet if we did but turn to those substantial sources of happiness which Heaven

in its mercy has vouchsafed unto us, how many griefs would heal, how many hearts would cease to suffer. We live," continued she, "with that selfishness of purpose and design as if we were to live for ever, forgetful that as we came into the world, so we depart from it, bringing nothing in, taking nothing out, and turning again into that dust from which we sprang. Even the longest life, what is it? even the most successful of human efforts for human objects, what the cause for envy? As the flowing tide washes from the sand the traces of children's pigmy feet, so in a little while all trace is lost on the shores of time, both of him who built, and of the works he raised."

The pink streak across Tobias Woodbee's brow became brighter, and his eyes glared angrily upon the speaker, but still he said nothing.

“These few observations,” continued Miss Christina, meekly, “particularly refer to you, Sir, your wife, and child, and would urge—”

“Not another word,” shouted the Squire hoarse with passion; and clutching the belt rope, he pulled it until the wire snapped. “I’ll not listen to another word. Whitlivered fool!” cried he, as the powdered headed lacquey, pale and trembling, entered the room, breathless with haste, “see that mad woman instantly from the door, and you set the value of a farthing upon your place or character, never let her enter again.”

“Sir,” returned Miss Christina Baxter drawing herself up with as much dignity as she was capable of exhibiting, “I require no witness for my departure, and I take my leave with the prayer that what I would have said may yet be instilled into you

heart by Him who knows its secrets;" and then, with a low and graceful courtesy, she quitted the apartment, and left Tobias Woodbee in an overflowing state of anger and resentment.

For him, indeed, to be taken to task by a penniless, obscure drudge! The presumption of human nature was monstrous!

The day thus begun, did not progress under more favourable auspices. Within an hour, and at the usual time of Leonard's diurnal grinding at the classics, he saw the Oxford double-first prize-man doing his best to make a kite rise in the wind, while his pupil stood by watching the attempt with gratified interest. Suspicions of a foul conspiracy to thwart him flashed across his brain, and he began to fear that Doctor Starkie was one of the chief movers in it, until he learned from that learned man's

own lips, that "it was a practical lesson in the generating of power by resistance.

This, it is superfluous to say, afforded the anxious parent some relief; but his temperament was of that not unkind, that when once ruffled, it took time to regain anything like placidity. Like many others who may be met without any great diligence of search, he played a kind of battledore and shuttlecock game with his troubles, and kept them

If displeased with his dog, it was one that Tobias Woodbee visited a portion of the real or imaginary offence that animal upon his wife. If the clock smoked, woe betide that luckless creature for the remainder of the day! Did the cook forget to count the minutes as they flew, and delay the dinner but a few minutes beyond the usual time, still the better half came in for a full share

the delinquency. If the tax-gatherer called, it was her fault. If the horses fell lame or ill, by some inexplicable ingenuity he fixed the principal part of the blame upon her. An attack of the gout was sure to be traced to the same origin, and, in short, whatever source of vexation or annoyance Squire Woodbee suffered, either socially, politically, or generally, he managed to keep vividly alive through the involuntary assistance of his wife.

Justice, however, bids it to be spoken that there existed a suppositious case of Mrs. Woodbee being the proximate cause of his present uneasiness. It was not probable—as he shrewdly conjectured—that Miss Baxter would have bearded the lion in his den, so to speak, had she not been incited to the desperate act by such decided instrumentality. And as regarded the practical lesson of generating power by resistance, the Squire

upon second thoughts, shook his head, and felt some misgiving as to *that* theory!

However, after a certain number of consecutive hours passed in a continued and unbroken recapitulation of his wife's sins which were listened to with the patience of a martyrdom, Tobias Woodbee felt himself slightly relieved, although far from recovered.

The night set in. The Squire had made both a good and a large dinner, and digestion, apparently, had waited upon appetite but still his wrongs, like Macbeth's daggers, were before him.

Once let the pendulum of Tobias Woodbee's injuries be set going, and nothing short of perpetual motion would bear the slightest comparison to it.

With the exception of the deep and almost unearthly stroke of the French clock, standing on the mantel-shelf at the back of

Squire's head, and which, now and then, brought forcibly to mind that time might be measured in another world by a corresponding tone, nothing disturbed the silence of the scene. The heavy drapery was drawn before the windows, and the candles on the table, throwing a dull and insufficient light to the further ends of the wide and lofty apartment, gave a cold, dull, and dreary appearance. Two large bronze figures, on the sideboard in the distance, holding lamps in the shape of globes, loomed through the murky light, designed upon festive occasions—if indeed there ever were such—to exhibit a portrait of Tobias himself, drawn from the life, and suspended on the wall between them.

Nothing scarcely could exceed the dull, cold, and dreary effect of that room; but still it looked grand, and that was something—nay, everything to Squire Woodbee.

For some hours he had been alone, and like many, whose mental resources far exceeded his, he began to feel fidgetty with solitude, and hoped momentarily to see some one to exchange a word with; but still no one came.

The French clock told off another hour in its mournful tone, and it was now much past the time for Leonard to pay the customary and respectful good night to his father; but the boy did not appear, neither was there a footfall of his coming.

It was very strange. Would they dare but no, no, that thought vanished like a broken bubble. No one would dare to disobey his orders, or break his rules, under *that* roof. It was more, much more, than any one would think of, and Leonard would come presently.

Still as a church vault, not a sound broke upon the ear, and the house might have

been inhabited by the dead alone, for any appearance to the contrary, when a tap at the door—a very slight tap, such a tap as a ghost might have given—preceded the kit-cat measure of Dr. Starkie's figure, as he entered the room by so much of his person.

“Oh!” exclaimed he, with his old stereotyped smile, “I beg your pardon, my dear Sir,” and he bowed lowly as he spoke; “but I thought our pupil might be here, and there's a little imposition of three hundred lines from Horace, I wished him to get more perfectly before retiring to rest.”

“He is not with me,” replied the Squire, “nor has he been to-night; but come in, Doctor,” continued he, “and I will have the boy sought for.”

The Oxford double-first prize-man required no second invitation to bring the length and depth of his body forward; but as he came, with the parenthesis forming

two even and strong lines in his cheeks, a keen observer would have perceived that his eyes were restless, and that he glanced anxiously under his brows, as if ill at ease.

Whatever the feeling, however, it was but momentary; for as soon as the Squire requested him to be seated, in his usual condescending manner, the shade passed off the doctor's visage, and there he was as usual soft, bland, and smooth as silk velvet.

"I have been worried—pestered to-day Doctor," observed Tobias Woodbee, fretfully.

Doctor Starkie lamented, exceedingly lamented, that any one, or anything, should have caused the minimum of annoyance.

"Interference is hateful to me," continued the Squire, "and the best of intentions inexcusable when meddling with *me*. Indeed, how any one can have the presumption to force their advice and opinions upon *me*, my

conduct, or designs, is really beyond, far beyond, a reasonable comprehension."

Doctor Starkie coincided; entirely so.

"In the morning I had that wretched imbecile, Miss Baxter, here —."

The Oxford double-first prize-man looked quickly up, and an ashy pallor spread itself quickly over his face from brow to chin.

"I need not add," continued Squire Woodbee, placing his right hand majestically on the left of his breast, and burying between his waistcoat and shirt front, "I need not add," repeated he, "that to listen to her was impossible."

Doctor Starkie breathed more freely.

"I dismissed her without heeding a word, it became her impertinence," said the Squire, although her speech was cut and dried, we no doubt. Then Mrs. Woodbee, the bottom of everything annoying to *me*, ventured to reiterate her complaints of your

harshness, coupled with the falsehood ——
The doctor's face became deeply lined
and he looked like a man about hearing his
doom—

“Coupled with the falsehood, for I can
call it nothing else, that Leonard was fa-
sinking into his grave, or, I believe, she sa-
something worse.”

Again the doctor felt relieved, and now
he was assured, within himself, that no me-
tion had been made of his conduct of to-
morning.

“I hope, however,” resumed the Squin
bearing an unusually close resemblance
a pouter pigeon, that Mrs. Woodbee is now
impressed with the conviction that I am
not to be trifled with any longer, and that
for the future, she will maintain a becom-
ing silence upon *all* subjects; for I am
of opinion, Doctor, that women were made for
neither thinking nor speaking. In bot

cases, they exhibit themselves to the greatest disadvantage, and the satire of drawing the wise woman without a head, formed a perfect illustration of the defects of the sex."

"A letter, Sir," said the powdered-headed lacquey, making a nervous entrance, and presenting the document spoken of on a large silver salver.

"From whom?" inquired his master.

"I don't know, Sir," rejoined the servant.

"I found it on the table in the hall."

It was quick work to break the seal, and as quick to glance at the contents, or, at least, at a portion of them.

"Gone!" ejaculated Tobias Woodbee, starting as if a shock of electricity had thrilled through his nerves. "Gone—my wife and child gone!"

"What?" exclaimed Dr. Starkie, and

the monosyllable sounded like the snap of a spiteful cur.

Slowly, and as if making sure that each word was correctly read, the letter was perused to the end, and then with the frenzy of a maniac, he crushed it in his hand, and throwing it under his feet, jumped upon it, as—Heaven forgive him!—he would have upon the writer, had she been within his reach.

CHAPTER V.

THE dawn of morning had just tinged the east with a pale streak of light when the mail jerked on the first line of stones leading through one of the greatest thoroughfares in the modern Babylon.

"Come, lad," said Jonathan, digging his left elbow into the corporal's ribs, "a man may break his neck uncommonly easy off a coach-box."

"Oh!" ejaculated Corporal Crump, waking with great suddenness, "I was asleep, was I?"

"You certainly *were*," rejoined the coachman, "unless, being tired o' this life, you wanted to end it with a fractured skull, or some such sudden measure."

"In that respect," returned the corporal, "my friends need feel no particular anxiety. But where are we now?" continued he.

He had asked the same question at almost every succeeding stage, and Jonathan therefore, put strong emphasis on the statement, "that *now* they were within a short quarter of a mile of the Bull Inn, Aldgate."

"Why, that's where we are to get down," observed the corporal.

"So you said," added the coachman drily, "fifty mile away."

The streets of London are never deserted. Be the hour what it may, early or late, there are always signs of life in them. And if, however, to give the flat denial to the alleged axiom, that rising betimes is con-

ductive to health and wealth, the break-of-day denizens of London are anything but distinguished for a blooming exterior or extraordinary possessions. The poor little slipshod sweep, shivering along the pavement, the itinerant vendor of fish on her road to Billingsgate, the Irish hod-man, the milkmaid clattering along with her pails, and followers of similar occupations, beginning with the small hours, are, it must be confessed, "great facts" in support of the refutation.

The lamps were just being extinguished by an over zealous and sanguine man, who must have possessed a highly imaginative brain in fancying that, as yet, they were unnecessary, when the mail stopped at the narrow entrance of the Bull Inn. A sharp, professional chink-wink of the guard's horn hastened the advent of the night-porter, and the luggage being confined to

narrow limits, both it and the passage were quickly cleared, to apply a nautical phrase, and conducted into a room, where a dull fire was soon made, by an effort of the night-porter, to put on a truly cheerful countenance.

“We shall meet again, I suppose; as the scissors said when they divided,” cried Jonathan to the corporal, as he chirruped the reeking team again into motion.

“If I didn’t think so,” responded the guard, “I’d ask for a lock of his hair.”

Corporal Crump waved a hand in silence to his jovial companions of the night, and hurried in the wake of Leonard and his mother.

The night porter, who, it is supposed, never admitted a passenger by the mail without there being a requisition of his services in some shape or other, stood drowsily by, waiting in silence for orders.

"Well!" said the corporal, who did not seem to appreciate the attention, and was struggling to divest himself of Jacob's overcoat, "what do you want?"

"Nothing," replied the night-porter, stoically.

"Then you're luckier than a few of my acquaintance," rejoined the old soldier, flinging the garment over the back of a chair; "but as we require no greater measure of services from you just now, perhaps you'll"—and the corporal motioned the night-porter to withdraw without further loss of time.

But the night-porter had not fulfilled his mission.

"Beds is aired," cried he.

"We don't want beds," mildly interposed Mrs. Woodbee.

"Boot-jack, slippers, or anything in *that*

line, Sir?" persisted the night-porter, and dressing the corporal.

"Not at present," was the reply.

He stood for a few seconds holding the door slightly ajar, as if hesitating to close it.

"Three bless-ed Christians by the name of Crump," at length said the night-porter, pondering as he spoke, "and not to want nothing. When, I should like to know," and he looked up as if anticipating a heavenly sign of some sort, "will there be another such a miracle?"

"Now," commenced Corporal Crump, briskly, "we must hold a council of war, and be prompt in both what we say and do," and in snuffing a solitary and flaring candle, he seemed to open the resolution illustratively.

"We shall be guided implicitly by your advice," observed Mrs. Woodbee, drawing

aside a thick veil which hitherto had covered her features.

Merciful Heaven! what a change was there!

The old soldier could scarcely suppress an ejaculation of horror as he gazed upon that altered face. Furrows, as if carved by the ruthless hand of age, and yet but the work of a few hours, lined her pallid cheeks, while her eyes, glassy with weeping, were sunk and encircled in two wide scarlet rims, scalded by her tears.

It might be that Leonard did not perceive the traces of such deep, overwhelming sorrow; for although he gazed upon his mother, it was with a cold and vacant stare.

"You are tired," said the corporal, commiseratingly, "and must have rest before—"

"No, no," interrupted Mrs. Woodbee,

with more energy than her attenuated and exhausted frame appeared capable of possessing, "I want no rest—*can* have none here. We may be pursued, overtaken—know not what!" and she buried her face between her hands, and seemed prostrate with grief.

Mechanically, and as if scarcely conscious of what he did, Leonard now placed a hand in one of his mother's, but dropping immediately, a joyous smile played upon his features, and his thoughts were evidently not of her.

The corporal felt a strong inclination to be severe at what appeared to him extreme heartlessness on the part of the boy, and was preparing to launch forth his blunt opinion upon the subject, when his eyes caught that of the mother's.

The reproach died upon his lips. In that look he saw the truth—the terrible truth.

Her fears were realized. The tender chord had snapped.

Then — but he brushed it quickly from his cheek—a tear rose and trickled down the veteran's face, and taking Leonard tenderly in his arms he drew his head upon his breast, and, with a woman's gentleness, held it there.

"He'll be better soon," said the corporal, in a low unsteady voice, "he'll be better soon."

"May Heaven grant so!" fervently ejaculated the mother.

"I think," remarked Corporal Crump, after a brief pause for the recovery of his self-possession, "that the sooner we leave here the better; but before doing so I'll just tell you what my plan is. I've thought of it more or less all night. There's a comrade of mine, an old campaigner, living near Hampstead, and although we

haven't met for many a long year, and we've kept up a running-fire kind of acquaintance through a letter once in a while. Every Christmas, as regular as Christmas comes, he sends an invitation for me to come and see him, and as it is barely three weeks since that I had one, there's little doubt of finding him well and hearty. He is a queer subject is Bill Stumpit!" said the corporal, reflectively. "He lost his right leg at Salamanca, and yet makes more flourish of the wooden one than he did of the natural member, the place of which it usurped, I don't know to speak. I can't answer, from my own knowledge, what his quarters are as regards size or convenience; but I'll be answerable to you that they are as clean as a fresh-scour steel scabbard, and as for a welcome! I'll leave that alone. Poor Bill! his timber will melt at the sight of me! Now, *à propos*," continued Corporal Crump, "is

march straight to Bill Stumpit's, where if we can't exactly obtain all the accommodation we want, still he's the very man to tell us where we can get it, and, at the same time, an opportunity will be given for him to show us the quality of his rations, of which he's apt to boast in his correspondence.'

"I depend upon your arrangements," observed Mrs. Woodbee, "and am quite sure they will be for the best of which circumstances will permit."

"Then again," resumed the corporal, saluting the compliment as became his rank, "if there should be anything like a hunt after us—"

"As there is sure to be," added Mrs. Woodbee, anxiously. "I even tremble while we remain here."

"And if they are closer upon us," returned he, "than we've any reason to suppose, we shall be away long before

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their arrival, and, as I was going to where can we be safer than in a re where we've never been before, and consequently unknown except, perhaps, through the trumpets of fame as blown by Stumpit? At this point, the Bull Inn, gate, all clue and trace must be lost of points of our course, and when I look to the compass, north, south, east, or west line appears to me so straight as the chalked out. ”

“ Then let us proceed, ” said Mrs. W. bee. “ When on our way I shall lose dread each smallest sound creates. ”

“ Decision, Ma'am, ” rejoined the corp “ when once arrived at should be acted without delay. We'll go, but as manoeuvres are often necessary to insure a victory continued he, with a full-blown display of egotism, “ leave the manner of our going to me. ”

The night-porter was now summoned, and he returned to the room armed with a bootjack and two pairs of slippers.

"Which is our way," said Corporal Crump, eyeing the man as if he would gimblet a hole through him, and nail him to the wall, "that is to say," continued he, "can you direct us on our road to Turnham Green?"

The night-porter entertained a sudden and powerful inclination to be witty at the expense of the corporal's question; but upon making a short survey of the stern-featured, upright, and wiry figure before him, he deemed it a much safer proceeding to practise a little self-denial.

"Turn-em-green?" repeated the night-porter, looking at the floor as if inspecting a chart correctly mapped and scaled.

"Well, no matter!" rejoined the old

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soldier, irritably, or professing to be so,
“any hackneyman knows it, I suppose?”

“Blindfolded,” returned the night porter; and with this reply Corporal Crump led the way from the Bull Inn, Aldgate.

CHAPTER VI.

It has been observed by an authority in whom some confidence may be placed, both as regards the verity and discrimination of his opinions, that Bill Stumpit was "a queer subject;" and if eccentricity of style, with originality of character, are combined in that description, then a more faithful one could scarcely be presented in a briefer sentence.

In referring to the past services which he had rendered, doubtless, to a grateful nation, Bill Stumpit was in the habit of calling himself "an old Peninsolar," and

from the "lopping" he had received in the loss of a leg, a hand, and an eye, his addition to the announcement "that he had seen a little service," might hypercritically be regarded as superfluous.

With his brows crowned with imaginary wreaths, a discharge, in which "honorable mention" was made by his colonel, and the munificent pension of sevenpence *per diem* granted, it is needless to say, by an appreciating country, Bill Stumpit, or, properly speaking, all that was left of him, retired from the army, and again sought the suburban scenes of his home and childhood.

In the maimed, halt, and blind old Peninsular, few would have recognised the handsome recruit who, fired by "the spirit stirring drum and the ear-piercing fife," resolved to seek glory in the cannon's mouth or death, as became a soldier. The prize which the lottery of fate awarded him,

was the glory he coveted, and hence, it is **fair** to suppose, he had no just reason to **complain** of the blind jade who turned the **wheel**.

Upon his retirement from public service—**he** would never admit that he was dismissed—Bill Stumpit became the master of a limited establishment in Hampstead Vale, which, by dint of economy and thrift, and combining the professional occupation of beating carpets, netting birds, and cultivating a small but productive garden, he managed to support, with equal comfort to himself, and credit as a worthy member of the community at large.

Tradition is silent as to the cause—**provided** there was any—of the old Peninsular **adopting** a costume of striking singularity; **but** at all times and seasons he might be **seen** in a three-cornered black felt hat, not unlike that represented in the portraits and

statuettes of his great enemy Napoleon, a shell jacket of coarse blue cloth, buttoned closely to the throat, a pair of leather breeches, which, from constant wear and friction, shone in certain parts like polished mahogany, and a short black gaiter, partly covering the solitary leg yet sensitive to touch, with a heavy and buckled shoe of massive construction, designed, apparently, to last an ordinary lifetime.

Such was the garb Bill Stumpit wore, and which he would not have changed for a court-suit, bag-wig, and steel-hilted sword included.

A black patch screened the perished orb, and an iron hook supplied the place, however imperfectly, of the lost hand; while the wooden member, being muffled at the foot by an effective roll of drugget, had a quiet and subdued tone about it which was

pleasant to hear, in comparison to the general harshness of such substitutes.

It has been intimated that the old Peninsular, as a recruit, was comely of feature; but if truth must be spoken, there remained no vestige of the past in Bill Stumpit's physiognomy. Sallow and furrowed, his face bore strong evidence of the ravages of age, rough treatment, and a close association with more of the "downs" of life than of the "ups;" while the tip of his nose, from the total want of a barrier of teeth, almost formed a junction with his chin. A clear, dark eye, however, as hard and sparkling as a diamond, shone with the brightness of a frank, kindly nature, and could not have belonged to any one whose heart—to use a comely phrase—was not set in the right place.

Not a prettier cottage—albeit humble in the extreme—was to be seen in Hampstead

Vale than the old Peninsular's. With garden before and a garden behind, it may be described as placed about midway in its own grounds; and had it not been for the water-butt at the back, which certainly occupied a large proportionate space, as many radishes, early cabbages, lettuces, peas, beans, and a seasonable course of other vegetables, might have been raised in corresponding profusion on the north-west side of the building as on the south-east. At the same time, it must not be erroneously supposed that Bill Stumpit's taste was so cramped with utilitarian objects, that no flowers were to be seen within his domain. On the contrary, spring announced that she was coming in his knots of snowdrops and crocuses, summer in the display of blush roses, autumn in the marigolds, and winter by the red berries which speckled his holly

bush. The old Peninsular's garden was a perfect index of the seasons.

A narrow gravel path, flanked by a dwarf sweet-briar hedge, led from the merest sham of a gate that ever was seen—for it would not have stopped a lame goose from throwing a somerset over it—straight to the threshold of the bright-green door, where a sight of the most dazzling kind met the view in the form of a brass knocker. Nothing in the shape of brass was ever brighter than this knocker; and no wonder, for it was as certain to meet with a vigorous daily polishing at the hands of Bill Stumpit as the day came. He liked, it was said, to examine his features as they were reflected on its surface, notwithstanding the resemblance was far from a flattering one, and it was circulated by the busybody report, that when got up for particular occasions, it was

his invariable rule to study the general effect in this the peculiar object of his care.

In conspicuous letters, painted on one of the corners of the cottage, were the words "Paradise Lodge;" and if the exterior possessed any claim to so hope-inspiring a title, the interior, at least, bore a corresponding one. Like the brass knocker, everything was furbished to the fullest extent that friction could produce. Nothing exceeded the difficulty of sitting still on the wooden-bottom chairs; and it was far from an unusual sight to behold an acquaintance of Bill Stumpit's gradually sliding to the ground, with a face on which considerable dismay might be traced.

To a nervous temperament, perhaps, Paradise Lodge might have been fraught with greater bliss had the commonwealth of birds, chirping, twittering, and rubbing their beaks fretfully against the narrow confines

air cages, suspended in rows upon rows
 at the walls, been emancipated. Parlour,
 ge, kitchen, staircase—birds here, birds
 birds everywhere. Forming a part,
 ver, of the ways and means by which
 lise Lodge was maintained, they must
 garded as essential to the well-being of
 stablishment, rather than as objects of
 whim, or luxury.

Up with the lark and to-bed with the
 was the standing rule of the old Pe-
 lar; and as the rising of the former is
 ned, according to ornithologists, by
 ising of the latter, it may be said
 the division of his hours was still
 the direct regulation of the earth's
 iary.

“sou'-west wind,” whistled Bill
 pit—for he could only speak through
 musical modulation of the breath, from
 ss of his teeth—and opening the lattice

of his dormitory, he leant with folded arms upon the window-sill, and gave his customary morning look-out. "A sou'-west wind," repeated he, "and a likely one for linnets. They fly low on a morning such as this, and are on the feed; so we'll try presently what can be done with linnets."

The old Peninsular, at this juncture, was clad in that light and scanty attire which is commonly adopted for sleeping in, and he would have been permitted both to begin and complete his toilet without prying into its mysteries, were it not for the tempting opportunity of showing how a wooden leg and iron hook are managed in secret.

Without the assistance of either crutch or stick, Bill Stumpit hopped nimbly to his leg, which stood by the side of a cotton umbrella in a corner of the room. Taking it in his hand and hook—for the latter might be deemed a fixture, and was never removed

except for repairs—he ran his eye critically down it, as a gun-barrel is sometimes examined, to see if it continued straight and trust-worthy. Being apparently satisfied with the inspection, he proceeded to adjust it to the stump, and having fixed it in about the same time that is occupied in drawing on a tight boot, the old Peninsular took a stride forward, and turning short round, as if upon a pivot, continued to pace to and fro by the side of his bed.

“Ha!” whistled he, looking down at the mechanical arrangement, “what a blessing it is to have a bit of British oak under one!” and lifting his leg he gave it a slap expressive of unqualified admiration. “Some,” continued the old Peninsular, making a sonorous stamp upon the floor, “complain of gout, corns, bunions, chilblains, and such like inconveniences; but when do ye find ’em in a bit of British oak?” and again

he brought down the bit of British oak with a violence which made every window in Paradise Lodge chatter again.

Having satisfactorily concluded the arrangement with his leg, Bill Stumpit drew on his leather breeches, and proceeded to shave himself without the usual assistance of hot water, soap, or looking-glass.

The ordeal, however, seemed to be one little short of martyrdom; for upon holding the moveable part of his nose well up with his hook, and drawing the razor sharply across his upper lip, tears started from the old Peninsular's eye as if he had ruthlessly applied an onion to it.

"I begin to think," said he, looking at the edge of the instrument which bore strong affinity to a handsaw, "I begin to think," repeated he, "that—" but here an interruption took place.

There was somebody knocking at the

door, and that, too, with a force of no gentle nature.

With the razor in hand, and his nose in the hook, Bill Stumpit betook himself to the casement, when to his surprise he saw three strangers—or what appeared to him to be such—standing at the threshold of the bright-green, brass-knocker door of Paradise Lodge.

Not immediately, for the old Peninsular was both cautious and reflective ; but after giving time for his bright, sparkling eye to take in each and all, respectively and collectively, he ventured to put the well-known question of “ who was there ? ”

“ Who’s here ? ” replied Corporal Crump, glancing up with a good-humoured laugh. “ Supposing I was to say your grandfather, would ye believe me ? ”

“ Grandfather ! ” repeated Bill Stumpit, who began to entertain the notion that an undue

liberty was being taken with him. ' grandfather, Mister Whoeveryoumaybe a respectable man, and didn't go a-giving chaffy answers to civil question

"Come, come," rejoined the other rejoicingly; "I've known before now a private getting a precious dusting for going in that style to a full corporal."

Quick must have been the thought—lightning of the mind—which, vibrated through the old Peninsular's brain, struck the chords of memory.

"It's him," cried he, flying round on a bit of British oak, "I know it's him! Something in 'ards tells me so. Say, speak, is to say hold your tongue," shrilly when Bill Stumpit, craning his neck out of the window, and making a wild, convulsive movement with the hook. "Don't tell all at once. I'm an old Peninsular, D—for I know you're Dicky—and I've

a little service, and I can't a-bear shocks as I used to were. Be gentle with the old Peninsoolar, Dicky. To double-shot him n-n-n-now," continued the veteran, with a rising gorge, as he hooked an unshed tear swimming in his eye, "you'd bust his breech."

"Be lively, Billy," rejoined Corporal Crump, "and you shall find me a light, easy-going cartridge."

Lively kittens racing after their tails; lambs frisking in a May-day sunshine; children set free "in all their gushing joy" from school; an Irishman at Donnybrook Fair or a wake; the devil in a gale of wind; a bull in a china-shop: in short, nothing on the earth or under it, could be pourtrayed to the imagination in a more lively condition than Bill Stumpit became upon the receipt of this suggestion.

With a hop, skip, and a jump, and a

jump, skip, and a hop, the old Peni was at the door; bolt, bar, and latch his touch, and Corporal Crump, twinkling of an eye, found himself clutch of an arm and hook of no or power.

“O Dicky!” ejaculated the v with almost amatory fondness, “if but a-known you’d been a-coming, killed my pig!”

“Perhaps he isn’t fit for slaying siderately put in the corporal, as he re the hearty greeting.

“Not quite,” rejoined Bill Stump holding his friend in a warm embrace few more bushels, and he’ll be prett But who have we here?” continuing releasing the corporal; and turning Woodbee and Leonard, he presented hand to one, and the hook to the oth led them triumphantly into Paradise

With as much military precision, perhaps, as politeness, he begged that his guests might be seated, and then facing Corporal Crump, measured him inch by inch slowly upwards, and fixing his hard, bright, diamond eye upon him, asked, in a tone almost sepulchral, "whether he'd been and done it?"

"Done what?" replied the corporal, laughing.

"Done what!" repeated the old Peninsular, with a sneer. "Havn't we a-gone together over mountain and over sea, marched, counter-marched, fought in line, column, and square; been picketted at outposts; bivouacked, volunteered in forlorn hopes, stood side by side, back to back, when the chances appeared likely we should be spit-
ed together—I say, haven't we done all this?"

"And more," replied the corporal.

"You confess that, do ye, Dicky?" replied the other. "Then, perhaps, you'll

take a step further, and confess—for it's a great relief, I'm told, to a heavy conscience—that, with a friend who's shared so many dangers, ye might not have been quite as dumb about the greatest of your life."

"What does the old figure-head mean?" said the corporal, evidently puzzled.

"Mean?" repeated Billy Stumpit, folding his hook and arm. "I'll be plain—plain enough to be understood. Haven't I the honour," continued he, turning to Mrs. Woodbee, and bringing his hand methodically to his brow, "to *saloot* Miss Corporal Crump?"

"Oh, no!" interposed the corporal hastily, "certainly not. A mistake—an extraordinary mistake!"

"Then I ask your pardon, Dicky," rejoined the old Peninsular, giving him a patronising tap on the back with the iron hook. "I ask your pardon, Dicky," re-

peated he. "I thought, from present appearances," and he waved the instrument so as to take in or encircle the forms of Leonard and his mother, "there'd a-been a considerable addition to the Crumps, and which circumstance were kept particularly dark from one human's bosom," and he pointed significantly to his own.

"No, no," added the corporal, who appeared disposed to be angry with his friend for committing so egregious a blunder. "I'm not married, nor going to be, as far as I know. This is a lady—a lady born, Billy,—and her son, who I wish to speak to you about by an' by."

"I ask your pardon, Dicky," for the third time said the old Peninsular, keeping up a vigorous knocking between the corporal's shoulders, "no offence was meant, and none given."

The ceremony of shaking hands all round

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was now commenced, and, being ended, seemed to put matters all on the most desirable footing.

As a sight, of its kind, nothing could be more refreshing than the efforts of the old Peninsular to render his travel-worn friends as comfortable as the means and appliances at his command, and the capacity of Paradise Lodge, would admit.

A thousand interesting questions were asked, and a corresponding number of answers given, while he bustled about collecting comforts and restoratives into a focus. A brisk, cheerful little fire entered an appearance with the speed of magic, a little copper kettle, as bright as the brass knocker, began to sing and vomit forth clouds of steam; delicate red-streaked rashers of bacon cracked and fizzed upon a little gridiron; layers of toast were raised

into a miniature pyramid; eggs, fresh laid as morning dew, grumbled loudly at their fate in a saucepan, and with a few collateral odds and ends, in the shape of a bouquet of the greenest watercresses that ever grew in rill or rivulet, a roll of butter, on which the frost glistened like so many fairy lamps, and a substantial loaf, which looked heavy but felt light—completed Billy Stumpit's hasty arrangements.

“I should a-been told that company was a-coming,” remarked he, shaking his head with the smallest visible taste of reproach at the corporal. “Things, Mum, then,” continued he, directing his discourse to Mrs. Woodbee, “might a-been more in order, so to speak; but if three angels from heaven had dropped through the roof, they wouldn't be more welcome to my eggs and bacon than you are; so fall to.”

“We are greatly indebted for your hospi-

talities," replied Mrs. Woodbee, "and I hope that the abruptness of our arrival will not inconvenience you."

"Spoken *like* a lady!" responded the old Peninsular. "It's easy to learn when gentility speaks," continued he, "there's an oiliness about it which the low-bred 'uns can't give tongue to," and then he stumped round the table with a flitting movement, proffering everything to everybody, until he gasped for breath from over-exertion.

There was a circumstance, however, which bothered the brains of Billy Stumpit more than he would have felt disposed to confess at that early period of the meeting, and that was the tender and striking attention paid by Corporal Crump to the young stranger. Standing respectfully by his side, he appeared to watch, with a careful, anxious eye, every look and gesture, and endeavoured to anticipate all his slightest wants.

Not a word passed his lips, but every now and then he bent an inquiring look upon the corporal's face, and smiled like an infant in a pleasing dream. Then starting, as if he missed some one, he turned to his mother, and, stretching forth a hand, clasped one of hers, as if to assure himself that she was there.

"Come, young Sir," said the old Peninsular, feeling the mystery somewhat oppressive, "you don't seem to be a-getting on," but at this moment he caught an unmistakable look from the corporal to turn his attention to another quarter.

"My son is both fatigued and ill," said Mrs. Woodbee, "and appears—poor fellow!—to little advantage. It is our hope, however, that change of scene and air—"

"There's none better, Mum," interrupted Bill Stumpit, "than that which he's now a-breathing on. I'll back it against all the

atmospheres in the known universal world. So where you're well, there let well be."

"Can you find room then," said the corporal, "for—"

"A parish," again broke in the old Peninsular, "I can find room for a parish when I think fit, Dicky, and as to a-letting one of you go, *I* wont, and there's an end on't."

"In a day or two, I—"

"Years, Dicky, years you mean," said the veteran, "don't talk of days. We'll club pensions, beat carpets, net birds, smoke pipes, and live in paradise! I see it all now," continued he, wildly flourishing his bit of British oak, "*This is Lewtenant Somerset's widder, that's a sprig from the original block—although I e-roneously believed that same sprig to be a gurl—we're here altogether at last, where we should*

a-been at first, and so we'll remain, world without end. Amen."

"You're out in the particulars," replied the corporal; "but you shall have them corrected presently, Billy. I'll enlighten ye concerning who we are, why we came, and all about us, if you'll only have patience. It's no use guessing, take my word for it."

"I must leave our mutual friend," observed Mrs. Woodbee, "to enter into the fullest explanation which I feel the strangeness of our coming demands, and to convey what our easily satisfied desires are. In the meantime," continued she, "I think a few hours' repose would refresh my son if—"

"Don't say another word, Mum," interrupted the old Peninsular, who appeared invariably ready to prevent the necessity of concluding a sentence. "I'll have as nice a crib ready, in less than five minutes, as man, woman, or child could wish a shake-down

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in," and away he went with the agility of a man in the possession of two superior limbs, albeit one was a bit of British oak.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE were no suspicions in the mind of little general shopkeeper, upon return-home, and finding from Bridget that his son and the corporal had taken a sudden departure with his second best top coat, that it was a case of petty larceny for ministerial interference; but to say that he surprised would feebly convey anything but an expression of his feelings upon the subject. Jacob paced up and down the back settlement of the shop parlour, or, to be more strictly to the gait which the

confined limits of the back settlement obliged him to adopt, continued to turn himself round and round like a lark roasting at the end of a string, and endeavoured by the most strenuous efforts to disentangle the thread of the mystery. The more, however, he tried, the greater and more numerous the obstacles appeared, and he began to feel the necessity of abandoning the puzzle in despair, until further elucidation was thrown upon it, when, to his astonishment—for he both thought and hoped that she had long since been a sojourner in the land of dreams—Clara stood by his side.

She was pale, very pale, and her eyes proclaimed that they were not long free from tears.

“I am truly glad that you have returned, Mr. Giles,” she said, taking one of his hands, and, clasping it between her own, she looked upwards into his face with an expression

which threatened to turn, at the spur of the moment, Jacob's heart into liquid.

"Has anything happened?" inquired he, as an icy chill crept through the conduits of his blood, and each particular hair upon his head, few as the number was, began to rise and stand on end, "like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

"Nothing to cause alarm," replied Clara, quickly; "but come with me; mamma wishes to speak with you, and, to do so, has been counting the minutes for hours past."

"While I've been imbibing at the Rollicking Club!" said Jacob to himself; "my resignation goes in to-morrow morning—that's all;" and with this threat of self-to-be-visited punishment, he followed Clara's light tread to the door of the snuggerly.

Upon entering, Mrs. Somerset was discovered lying on the sofa, supporting a brow which, from the heavy, leaden appear-

ance of her eyelids, seemed to be throbbing with no gentle pain.

“My good, kind friend,” she said, extending a hand to the little general shopkeeper, and the smile with which he was greeted, would alone have been deemed payment in full for a heavy account of long standing. “I have a few words to speak with you before retiring to rest; but I began to fear,” continued she, “that my poor head would have compelled me to go long before your return. Be seated, for I may occupy, with a woman’s garrulity, some time.”

“Rollickers, farewell!” soliloquised Jacob, albeit the tone was inaudible, as he dropped into a chair.

“You are aware, perhaps,” resumed Mrs. Somerset, rising on one arm and leaning forwards, “that the corporal has left us.”

“Yes, Mem,” replied he, “I certainly *were* aware of that circumstance.”

“And marvel at the cause ?”

Jacob Giles, with a slight tinge of the tomato in his cheeks, admitted that he could not resist a strong feeling of most potent astonishment anent the reason of so unexpected, unforeseen, and extraordinary an incident in the long list of the world's wonders.

“It is but natural that you should do so,” continued Mrs. Somerset, “and not to render an explanation of the fullest description would appear as unwarrantable on our part as it would be ungrateful.”

The little general shopkeeper perceived—or thought that he did—a hesitation in these words, as if they were delivered with the reluctance which duty impelled, rather than by the force of inclination.

“If so be, Mem,” returned he, with the hope, notwithstanding, that his generosity would meet with instant rejection, “if so

be, Mem," repeated he, "that it isn't pleasant to all parties that I should be made acquainted with the cause of the field marshal's—" Jacob, it will be remembered, had had his fourth glass of brandy and water—"taking himself off ; if so be anything in the family way; which delicacy forbids vulgar ears, then Mem, I live in the Christian hope that I can put my hand upon heart and say, let it bide, I would rather not be informed than communicated with."

"And yet," observed Clara, who was sitting on the sofa and chafing the cold, icy cold hands of her mother, "you cannot, I am sure, but feel a deep interest in your friend the corporal, and all affecting him."

"I do, Miss," added Jacob, in a way which could leave little doubt of the sincerity of the expression, "I take a parent's interest in the brigadier-general, and in every one and everything, from his mother to a mouse"

trap, which belongs to him. I do," said he emphatically, "as I'm a believer in Genesis!"

"Hark!"

"What was that?"

It was a sound which made Jacob Giles skip from his chair, and seizing the poker, he brandished it above his head with a sternness of demeanour approaching to the savage.

"That's somebody knocking at my shop door," remarked he, in a melo-dramatic whisper, "and not in the precise manner which a friend would be supposed to apply either foot *or* knuckles."

"Hush!" exclaimed Mrs. Somerset, with her eyes glassy with excitement. "It may be inquiries for them—for us."

"What can be done?" ejaculated Clara, terror-stricken. "I'm sure it's that dreadful man!"

"May I be bold enough to inquire," said Jacob, bringing the point of the poker to his toe, "*what* dreadful man, Miss, you seem to be labouring under the apprehension of beholding?"

"Stay!" said Mrs. Somerset. "If it should be him—I—I—I cannot—he must not see me."

"If there's anybody on the other side ~~of~~ my shop door likely to be disagreeable ~~to~~ you, Mem," observed the little general ~~shop~~ keeper, with as bold a front as ever ~~was~~ offered to an enemy, "and let that anybody be who he may," continued Jacob, with a flourish of his weapon, "he will make his appearance only across this defunct and mortal body."

"I think—I fear it is Mr. Woodbee," responded Clara. "That surely must be his voice."

"Oh, if that's all!" exclaimed Jacob

Giles, as valiant as Jack the Giant-Killer, at least, "leave *him* to me. He has his groceries from a wholesale London house, Mem ; *he* doesn't deal at this shop."

"Do not tell him that—"

"Excuse me, Mem," interrupted Jacob. "It's far from wise, oftentimes, to tell us **what** we are not to do. By some ill-luck," **continued** he, "we run, as it were, right **against** the very post, painted white and **particularly** conspicuous, which great caution warned us to avoid a long distance off. Now, leave the handling of the matter to me without instructions, and whatever may be that unruly disturber of our nocturnal peace on the other side of my shop door, I'll soon quiet him, as sure as apple dumplings are made with apples!"

"Give him no information concerning us," said Mrs. Somerset, timidly. "I would not have him learn—"

comfort you require."

"We'll retire, then, to our bed," rejoined Mrs. Somerset, "until the conclusion of this business. Give me arm, Clara."

"Allow me, Mem," said Jacob, proffering a ready assistance.

"Thank you," was the reply; "my daughter's arm is sufficient. I am very light."

She was light, very light; and as she assisted her from the sofa to the adjoining room, the words struck coldly to her

CHAPTER VIII.

“Who’s there?” asked Jacob, placing his ear close to the key-hole of the door, as if in the anticipation of being answered through the medium of a whisper.

“Open the door instantly,” shouted a voice in a tone of the most peremptory description. “Am I to be kept waiting here all night?”

“That in some measure depends upon yourself,” rejoined the little general shopkeeper, “for I must first hear your name before bolt, bar, and lock, are touched by fingers of mine.”

"Woodbee, then," returned the same voice; "I am Mr. Woodbee, of the Oaks."

"Very good," responded Jacob. "In that case, Sir, your request shall be granted; and without further loss of time he proceeded to conform to the imperious mandate.

"I've been kept here long enough, I think," said the Squire, as the door was thrown open. "Why didn't you come before?" continued he, stepping forward, supported by a staff composed of Dr. Starkie and James Burly, who appeared dimly in the rear by the light of a candle, which Jacob carried and held above his head.

"An Englishman, Mr. Woodbee, a free-born Briton," replied Jacob, touching himself on the breast, "is not, I believe, bound by law to hurry either his legs or arms within the walls of his own castle."

"Come, Sir!" ejaculated the Squire, throwing out the white waistcoat, and stretching his neck over the cravat; "do you know who you are speaking to?"

"If you have told the truth, and my eyes don't deceive me, Sir," quietly replied Jacob Giles.

"The man's drunk," said the master of the Oaks, turning to his staff.

"Say nobly wild, Mr. Woodbee," rejoined Jacob. "The word drunk, Sir, sounds harsh, and by no means conveys a true state or condition of the individual who has the honor of appearing before you."

"Silence!" roared the Squire, advancing in a threatening manner; but, to his surprise, the little general shopkeeper budged not an inch, and there they were, face to face, in the closest of imaginable quarters.

The position was truly unpleasant for

Squire Woodbee, and he felt the awkwardness of it to an extent which a gentleman only of his unlimited importance and self-esteem can be supposed to entertain.

“Impudent varlet!” at length gasped the Squire, and the vent came opportunely, otherwise, from the purple hue of his cheeks and swelling of the entire system, worse consequences might have been anticipated.

“Your pardon, Sir,” said Jacob. “If there be impudence on either side, I’m bold enough both to say and think, that it does not come on mine.”

“Don’t you agree with me, my dear Sir,” broke in Dr. Starkie, “that not another moment should be lost? The night is advancing—”

“True, true,” added the Squire. “Tell me,” continued he, frowning upon the little general shopkeeper, but it seemed to produce so small an effect that it remained

invisible to the naked eye, "are my wife and son here?"

"Certainly not, Sir," replied Jacob, looking at his questioner straight, ay, in the very pupils of his eyes.

"Have they not been in the habit of visiting some person, some lodger in your house?"

"A lady, Mr. Woodbee," was the rejoinder, "a lady has been occasionally called upon by—"

"Have they been here to-night?"

"That I cannot say."

"Then I must see this person," returned the Squire, "and gain the information from her. Let her be told so."

"Not to-night," firmly replied Jacob Giles. "The lady," continued he, "is an invalid, and cannot be disturbed at so late an hour."

"But I insist—"

“By what authority, Sir?” interrupted the little general shopkeeper in a manner which startled the master of the Oaks, and proprietor of the manors thereunto belonging. “I say, by what authority, Sir?” repeated he, with a brow on which the thunder of Jove himself sat threateningly.

It was strange, perhaps very strange, but Squire Woodbee began to assume the appearance of a snail with its horns pricked.

The effect was not lost upon Jacob Giles, and something like encouragement, backing, or “judicious bottle-holding,” was given at this moment by Burly James, who, standing on the back ground, made a succession of “upper cuts” and fancy movements with his clenched fists in the air, indicating, as far as probable construction can be placed upon typical movements, that he earnestly desired a repetition might be made of the salutary dose without delay. In short, they

seemed to say, "take a ~~sympathetic~~ at the ~~heart~~ and at him again."

"Supposing, Sir," resumed Jacob, "that I had come to your mansion in the same manner that you have thought proper to observe in coming to my shop, how would you have treated me?"

"Nonsense, man!" exclaimed Squire Woodbee, making a strong effort to recover his oozing assurance. "I'm not here to be questioned, but to be answered. Tell me—"

"Not one word more, Sir," interrupted Jacob Giles, "unless fair words be first and fairly spoken to me. I am not a quarrelsome man, Mr. Woodbee, as all my neighbours can bear witness; but I am not to be ridden over rough-shod, even by my superiors."

"Well done, old——"

It was fortunate, perhaps, for the knight

of the muscles that he effected a sudden and full stop in his exclamation of approval.

Squire Woodbee turned quickly round, but all that the movement discovered was Mr. Burly endeavouring to stifle a most apoplectic and violent cough, which appeared, if outward appearances could be trusted, far from improbable of cutting short the mortal career of that worthy member of the human family.

“Peradventure, my dear Sir,” said Dr. Starkie—soft, sleek, and silky Dr. Starkie—“you will permit me to put the necessary questions to this *good* man?”

The Squire silently signified that his assent was given.

“You say, if I understand the statement correctly,” began the Oxford double-first prize-man, addressing Jacob, “that the lady, whose name I am not familiar with, but

living under the protection of this humble, and I've no doubt, happy roof, cannot be spoken to at so advanced a period of the night?"

"Such is my meaning," replied Jacob.

Dr. Starkie bowed.

"And I also," continued he, bringing out the parenthesis in great force, "may venture to believe that you asserted, or intended to infer, that my dear pupil, and his amiable parent, were here during the evening?"

"No," returned the little general shop-keeper, shaking his head as an endorsement to the negative; "I didn't say that."

Dr. Starkie bowed with a deportment almost amounting to the lowly.

"At the same time," resumed he, "you would not take upon yourself the responsibility of leading us to conclude that the opposite was in accordance with the verifiable fact?"

"Gentlemen," said Jacob, "one, each and all, to be plain with ye, I know nothing concerning who's been here, or who's been here to-night. I'm only just returned from a serial meeting of the Rollickers, and the Harrow and Pitchfork."

"Humph!" ejaculated the Doctor. "May I ask if an individual of the name of Crump—I think the name *was* Crump," continued he parenthetically—"is one of the residents forming an unit of your family and bosom circle?"

"Corporal Crump of the King's Own Royals was one," proudly rejoined Jacob, "and a braver soldier, or better man, never honored a fellow Christian's roof."

"Bra-vo," shouted a voice in the rear, and again Mr. Burly was discovered struggling with the alarming tendency of instant suffocation.

"When did he leave?" inquired the

Doctor quickly, as if Jacob's last reply was putting him on the right scent.

"To-night," answered the little general shopkeeper; but with a reluctance of tone which did not escape the notice of his inquisitors.

"How?" said the Squire, like the snap of a dog.

Jacob Giles began to fear that, unwittingly, he was affording more information than might be desirable, and resolved to fence a reply.

"It cannot have escaped the notice of a gentleman like you, Sir," responded he, "that one may be aware of a fact without knowing *how* it was brought about. The *hows* and *wherefores* are difficult riddles for brighter heads than mine. Now as I have said," continued he, "the corporal left here to-night; but *how* he went is a mystery to me."

“Can’t you think, surmise, suppose, conjecture?” returned Dr. Starkie.

“Oh yes!” returned Jacob, snuffing the candle in his hand with a moistened finger and thumb, “there’s nothing easier, Sir, than to suppose the might-be’s in this world. For example, we could suppose that the field-marshal took his departure in a balloon, or it might be a wheelbarrow.”

James Burly was again seized with a fit, but whether of coughing or laughing it is difficult to decide. After a few doubtful preliminary efforts to suppress the effects, a favourable crisis was attained, and he observed in a weak voice—probably for his own private information—that he felt better.

“I’m afraid, my dear Sir,” observed the Doctor, turning to his patron, “that our remaining here is but a waste of time. This good man appears indisposed to con-

firm the slight information which we received, but I think we may conclude that what we have gathered is correct."

"Then they have three hours' start of us," rejoined the Squire, jerking out his watch, and if the sound was not a deceptive one, an oath hissed, serpent-like, between his clenched teeth, which might have shamed a devil.

"No matter," returned the Oxford double-first prize-man, "leave their discovery to me. Three hours' start, my dear Sir," and the old parenthesis came out strongly, "will not prevent a speedy capture. The race is not always to the swift."

Without thanking Jacob—they had little perhaps to thank him for—both turned upon their heels and left; but as the knight of the muscles was about taking his departure, he made a clandestine grasp at the little general shopkeeper's unoccupied hand,

and wringing it said, "You either know all or nothin', whichever is it, lad?"

"Nothing," replied Jacob.

"So I suspected," rejoined Mr. Burly with a shrewd nod. "A man must be a partickler knowing subject to seem to know nothin' when he knows everything; but when he knows nothin', it's by no means difficult to act as hignorant as you did, Jacob," and with this far from complimentary speech, he was about following his master's footsteps when a thought seemed to strike him. "Fee o' that," continued he, presenting the muscular development of his dexter arm. "Hard as mortared bricks!"

As soon as Jacob Giles was free from his unwelcome visitors, he hastened back to the snuggerly, and the night began to give place to the grey mists of morning before he quitted it.

A tale was told.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE is little interest in fiction. The mere imageries of an idle brain, upon reflection, seem but visions of the day, "begot of nothing but vain fantasy." It behoves the writer, therefore, who would enchain the reader's interest, not for a season, but for all time, to point to the sterner facts of history; and in stating that Mistress Twigg was almost inconsolable at the loss of Corporal Crump, is but a simple, unvarnished fact which, as the knight of the muscles has been heard to chant melodiously, "nobody could deny."

The bar parlour had lost its charm. There was the chair—that easy arm-chair—on which it was his wont to recline, as if it had been purposely assigned for his especial use; but where was the corporal?

Had any one been ridiculous enough to have raised a voice, and asked the question, echo would have answered “Where?”

Mistress Twigg felt this keenly. The hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork knew that it was useless to inquire, as everybody, high and low, rich and poor, old and young, in and about Grundy’s Green, appeared to be both mentally and physically occupied in the solution of this very question.

Where *was* the corporal?

Report, mounted on the post-horse—Rumour, scattered broadcast a thousand tales anent his whereabouts; but the widow, the buxom widow, believed not one. That the military were fickle, she knew. There

was no shutting her eyes to that acknowledged axiom. But for Corporal Crump to **run** away from *her* ! She could not believe **that**, and, womanlike, she would not.

That he was gone, it was true ; but **why** and where he was gone, did not appear **up**on the surface of things past or present. **It** of course became quickly and freely circulated that he accompanied Mrs. Woodbee **and** Leonard in their flight, and no prismatic variety of light and shade was wanting in the statements severally alleged to **be** the truth, and nothing but the truth.

One averred that Mrs. Woodbee ran away with the corporal greatly in opposition to his inclination, but persuaded against his will by entreaties which no mortal bosom could withstand. Another that the old soldier had forcibly carried the lady of the Oaks off, bound and gagged, in a sack. Some, more sage than their neighbours,

winked a hint, and others nodded inuendos. In short, nothing was left unsaid or undone to account for Corporal Crump's vanishing from Grundy's Green; and, as in the majority of cases wherein the popular tongue is greatly agitated, the truth alone, by some unaccountable agency, seemed to be the solitary cause permitted to remain unnoticed and uncared for.

It may be worthy of a passing remark, and justice, perhaps, demands it to be borne in mind, that Grundy's Green and its vicinity ought not to be regarded with too much censure for flying off at a tangent from the truth. On this subject, or, indeed, on any other, which may have directed its attention to a focus, the world is but Grundy's Green on a larger scale, and bad, very bad, as it may be, and is—if Mistress Twigg's judgment ought not to have a *caveat* entered against it—few reputations

suffer from tittle-tattle, scandal and malice, without some small causes for their origin. Slight, it must be confessed, they frequently are, and often exaggerated as far as the most fertile imaginations can strain them; but when the exaggeration is blamed, it should not be forgotten that indiscretion or folly lies generally as the occasion.

The hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork was never wearied with Jonathan and the guard's recital of the particulars of their journey on that eventful night when her hopes and Corporal Crump so unexpectedly went together. As if the words, falling from those respectable individuals' lips, were, like Cicero's, sweet enough to lure the wild bees, she would seem to hang upon them, and often as the tale was told, it seemed to lose no particle of its interest by almost nightly repetition.

Many a smooth and luscious glass of the

widow's own private and particular jar of cherry brandy, dedicated to especial individuals, and to far from general purposes, slipped, between the sentences, down the throats of Jonathan and the guard, as each by turns, took up the thread of the story and although winks, denoting suspicions and an irreverence for the subject, passed between them when Mistress Twigg's eyes appeared riveted upon her shoe buckle, or some such object, denoting safety from detection, they felt for her, perhaps; for as true as the needle to the pole, no sooner was the end attained, than they were ready to begin again.

"He's gone," observed the Guard, as the nocturnal change of horses was taking place at the door of the Harrow and Pitchfork, and his voice grated less harshly upon the ear, doubtlessly from the quality and quantity of the contents of the private jar. "He's

gone," repeated he, holding his glass for the ninth time, from force of habit, perhaps, rather than from inclination; "but like a coppery shillin', I'll bet ten to one he makes a return of it."

"Ten to one!" echoed Jonathan, pulling his shawl well down from the regions of his mouth, in order that he might be clearly understood, and, making a pause, he swallowed a cherry. "Ten to one, why it's a camel to a nutshell that he comes back again!"

"Do you think so, Sir?" said Mistress Twigg, and the gay ribands began to flutter as of yore, "Do you think so, Mr. Jonathan?" and the generous-hearted hostess thought no more of the tenth gratuitous help of the contents of the jar, than if it had been the first.

"In course I do," rejoined Jonathan, and he spoke like one whose opinion had been nicely weighed in the scale of probabilities, and I'll give ye a reason."

no reason for his Majesty's mail stop
but floods and snows."

"I'm not a woman," added the Countess as if his dignity had been touched in a venerable point; "and not being a woman," continued he, shaking himself into the folds of his second editions of coats, "I do not feel as such."

"We are certainly given to talk," said Mistress Twigg, "it's a weakness which cannot be denied. But your reason, Mr. Jonathan—and the widow smiled and coquetted in a way which began to fan a latent admiration in the coachman's bosom—can your reason be?"

Jonathan cleared his voice as only a

read as they run, so to speak, there wouldn't be so many wrong opinions in this world, because facts speak for themselves, whereas let those facts be made known through go-between measures, and what's the consequence? Why, their own mother wouldn't know 'em."

The coachman appeared to have arrived at a stage, and marked the point by burying a cherry.

"Well, so far so good, as I always say when we change 'osses," resumed Jonathan. "Now, from what I've observed with my own eyes, I put particular trust in, and I advise everybody to do the same. Not but we may sometimes be deceived even by them. I was once, with a inside bit of muslin, and it cost me a deal of anxiety, besides several pounds sterling."

Mrs. Twigg hemmed, and began covering up the jar of cherry brandy.

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“Trusting to my eyes then, as a general kind of rule,” continued he, “I’ve observed, that when persons or things go up, they’re next to certain to come down. Why it is I don’t know, and never could make out; but nothing seems to keep long at a height. Of dust we came, and to dust we return, and on this account, perhaps, all belonging to us points downwards.”

“Cut it short,” remarked the Guard, irritably. “When you *do* begin preaching, it’s like the round O; be as patient as you like, you can never find an end to it.”

“I’ve known a man afore now,” said Jonathan, “and he was guard to a mail, not remarkable in the neighbourhood in which he lived for patience. However, coming to the point, as the sagaciousest of dogs observed upon winding his game, I mean to say, that my reason for thinking Corporal Crump will make a return of it is,

that having, in accordance with what I saw, gone up the road, it's a moral certainty he'll come down again."

"Is that all?" asked the Guard.

"Quite so," replied Jonathan, "and a little over."

"Then I'm cheerful again," rejoined his companion. "Come along, we've a minute and a half to make good," and bidding the hostess farewell, he left the coachman to have a parting word with her.

"He'll come back," whispered he, "I know he will; but the reason I gave wasn't the ticket—mind ye, it wasn't *the* ticket."

"What is the ticket then?" innocently inquired Mistress Twigg, and her capacious bosom heaved a sigh.

"Can't you guess?" said Jonathan, with a roguish leer.

The hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork

simpered, and replied, "that she was never a good hand at guessing."

At this moment there was a blast, which, for loudness and duration, seemed to be blown by a Triton's breath.

"You're the ticket," returned Jonathan, giving Mrs. Twigg a touch of tenderness under her double chin. "You're the bait, Ma'am, that will bring the chap down the road again, what drinks to the King with no heel-taps, and——" here he looked round in the most mysterious manner, and dropping his voice, so that the words were scarcely audible, even to the willing ears to which they were addressed, added, "I wish it worn't so."

A shock—a shock of no ordinary force—vibrated through the widow's system. If not as an aspen leaf shaken in the zephyr's breath, still she shook. The feeling—in the ordinary course of feelings, acute or

chronic—passed, and upon raising her eyes, dove-like as Psyche's may be fairly conjectured to have been, if not literally so described, she—truth bids it to be written—hiccoughed.

“Hold fast,” cried a voice. “Let go their heads!”

“Twang, twang, chink-wink, twang,” went a horn, and Mistress Twigg was alone with her meditations.

CHAPTER X.

AMONG the multitude greatly puzzled by the late proceedings occupying the thought and discursive powers of the denizens of Grundy's Green, and a wide ring enclosing that locality, was the better half of Grimes—better as regards superior power in doing as she thought fit with

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A Tartar was Mrs. Grimes—the very cream of a Tartar.

Lean, spare, and stiff of form, Mrs. Grimes possessed a mouth like a screwed-up button-hole, and her small, round specks of eyes, fiery as a ferret's, were alone sufficient to inform the most casual observer of effects for causes, that she could give any one a bit of her mind upon the shortest notice, and upon any subject.

A line of stiff, wiry, reddish-coloured curls, which calumny asserted to be the abstracts of a wig, hung upon a brow, bearing—singular as the simile may appear—strong resemblance to a knee, and a poor, base, flabby imitation of Mistress Twigg's spiciest of caps, surmounting the whole, in no way improved or—artistically speaking—gave colour to the picture.

In short, if her face was her fortune, which there is great reason to suppose to

be the case, the apothecary could be said to have been greatly enriched by his acquisition, and as regards the ideal advantage distinguished from the actual hard cash, money-in-hand benefit, it still be placed on that side the ledger sublunary happiness, on which the balance stands conspicuously on the wrong side.

To speculate upon the mysteries of money would be among the idlest of human occupations. One had better far be in the midst of experiments of alchemy, and daily labour to discover the philosopher's stone, than the Nor'-west passage, than run the valuable of the grains of Time out in fruitlessly trying to solve a problem to which facts avowedly declare, there is no solution.

As a stepping-stone to the hopeless task, we have but to remember that the knowledge of the fundamental laws of nature is

es diametrically opposed to each other
 ot unite ; but for the flat overthrow
 defeat of this fundamental law, the
 er is respectfully requested to look
 nd, and if he, or she, does not perceive
 nient evidence in the union both of
 es, and nobodies, pertaining to his or her
 e of acquaintance, all that can be con-
 red is, that the circle can scarcely be
 enough to be seen through.

ere could be no more positive instance
 nomaly than the joining together of
 or and Mrs. Grimes ; for these bodies,
 ough indissolubly tied together, and
 id as one, without the possible loophole
 scape, presented as much antipathy to
 gle, as oil and water. Indeed, nothing
 t of a strong acid could be supposed
 ble of blending with Mrs. Grimes ; and
 apothecary's nature was of the liquorice

The bedroom of domestic life is pe-
held as a sanctuary, from which the
eye of the public ought to be hermeti-
cally sealed; but a licence should be
occasionally, to the strictest of rules, in
this an exception will be made, be-
much against the inclination of Mrs. G.
for she was in her nightcap.

Side by side rested the apothecary
his better half—better, as before has
stated, in certain particulars, and much
better of the two at the popular gas-
family jars. A solitary rushlight cast
pale, flickering, uncertain light upon
walls, and articles of furniture in the
mitory, and between the closely-drawn
dimity curtains surrounding the ‘
poster,’ long shadows stole and dis-
themselves in strange, fantastic shapes;
their heads, requiring little effort of
imagination to form them into likenesses

things belonging to the earth, and of those immeasurably below it.

With a hope, forlorn as it unquestionably was, for a perfect batch of patients were in that interesting condition which might momentarily demand his prompt attention, brooking of no delay—that the surgery bell might not disturb the soft, soothing slumber stealing away his senses to quit their mortal tenement and—but here the sentence stops ; for who shall say what becomes of the spirit when death's half-brother sleep decoys it hence?

With a hope, then, that he might be left to rest, Doctor Grimes turned upon his side, and began to settle himself to sleep with a cozy nestling down, and the tip of his nose buried in the softest bulge of the pillow, when a short but sharp “hem !” on the part of his companion, made his blood tingle through his veins, if the feeling may—

with considerable latitude—so be expressed, worse than the surgery bell would have done. It was a summons which he had heard before.

“Hem, a-hem!” again fell as a truly unwelcome sound upon his ear.

“It was far from a hot night, but the apothecary’s brow became slightly clammy with a damp, unpleasant moisture.

“Are you going to sleep, Mr. Grimes?” was the piping interrogative, delivered as if the questioner had met with a recent personal injury at the hands of the questioned. “I say, Sir, may I ask if you *are* going to sleep?”

“My dear,” pleaded the doctor, “I didn’t know—”

“Didn’t know?” interrupted the injured one, “as if *that* was an excuse.”

“I’m sure I’m willing—”

“And if you were not,” again snapped

don't, for our joint and several interests, associate the word fool with the humble individual who has to support that reputation."

"If you had been at that nasty Harrow and Pitchfork to-night, as the low pot-house is called," remarked Mrs. Grimes with a sneer which none but the sharpest of noses could have given due effect to, "I should have thought you'd been disgracing yourself, Sir. As it is I allow that, as far as I know, two or three cups of tea are the strongest beverage which you have taken."

"And by no means strong," thought the apothecary, but he took the precaution of keeping this opinion to himself.

"Believing you, therefore, not intoxicated," continued Mrs Grimes, with the greatest deliberation, "I begin to suspect, from your manner and language, that there

pause which, to the doctor, approached the awful, "you're sulky now I suppose?"

"By no means, Margaret," replied the doctor, gravely, for he thought it advisable to try the heavy business, having failed in the lighter walk of comedy. "I'm by no means sulky, Margaret, nor am I disposed to be sulky."

"Then perhaps you'll speak when you're spoken to, and not lie there like a senseless log that you are," said Mrs. Grimes.

"My dear Mrs. G.," pleaded the apothecary, "do I deserve this at your hands? I put the question advisedly, and expect, in the fulness of my confidence, an answer worthy of those attributes pertaining to the female bosom."

"Fiddle faddle!" ejaculated Mrs. Grimes, "you're making a fool of yourself, Sir."

"Margaret," returned the doctor, solemnly, "remember my professional reputation, and

don't, for our joint and several interests, associate the word fool with the humble individual who has to support that reputation."

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"Believing you, therefore, not intoxicated," continued Mrs Grimes, with the greatest deliberation, "I begin to suspect, from your manner and language, that there

is a deeply-laid plan of villainy to wound my feelings."

"My dear Mrs. G.," exclaimed the doctor, springing into a sitting position with emotion, and pulling off his cap by the tassel, "don't accuse me thus! What have I done? Tell me that, what have I done?"

"To the long list of injuries," replied Mrs. Grimes, "don't pull the clothes off me. Lie down, Sir, this minute. A pretty thing, indeed, to be chilled in this way!"

It might have been most profane on the apothecary's part, and will doubtlessly be so adjudged by the censors of both his sayings and doings, but at this moment he offered up a little prayer that Mrs. Grimes might be forthwith transformed into a pillar of salt.

Wishing, perhaps, to learn whether it would be granted, the doctor remained for a few seconds passively waiting the issue

of events; but as there appeared no symptoms of a turn in his favor, he quietly launched himself into the bed again, and abandoned all idea of a night's peace, as a luxury beyond the limits of his hopes.

"You asked a short time since," said Mrs. Grimes in language, measured as if by rule and compasses, "what you had done."

"Margaret, I did," responded the apothecary, still relying on the heavy business to bring him through.

"Pray, Mr. Grimes," returned she, "did it ever occur to your muddy intellect that equally grave faults lie at some persons' doors for *not* performing certain duties, as to others for the commission of actions adverse to the principles by which social order is preserved?"

"She's begun the flowery style," observed the doctor to himself, and a groan expressed the mental anguish which the thought en-

gendered. "There'll be no end to her oratory for hours to come."

"In plainer language," resumed Mrs. Grimes, "and consequently that which you will better understand, my present complaint is not of your having done anything antagonistic to my wishes, but leaving undone a certain domestic duty which I would have voluntarily fulfilled without the necessity of pressure."

"Domestic duty!" repeated the apothecary, raising his eyebrows, and looking as astonished as any gentleman so circumstanced can possibly be imagined. "Domestic duty, Margaret?"

"Don't parrot my words," rejoined Mrs. Grimes with decided irritation in her parts of speech. "I hate to be parroted. What I said I meant, and what I meant I said."

"At least, be explicit, Margaret," returned the doctor. "It's not asking too

much, I submit, to request that you'll be explicit."

"Keeping secrets from me then," added Mrs. Grimes; "the want of confidence in your wife, Sir; the close-fisted, lock-jawed, dumb, and dead silence you maintain upon all subjects, but more especially upon those which you know I most desire to be acquainted with. That's the domestic omission of duty, Sir, forming the foundation of my present complaint."

"I'm still at a loss, Margaret," said the apothecary, "still at a loss—"

"Are ye?" interrupted Mrs. Grimes, "then you shall soon be at a gain. Pray, Sir, were you not attending Squire Woodbee to-day?"

"Most certainly, Margaret," replied the doctor, "unquestionably, I was."

"Very well!" rejoined she with acrimony.

“And what have you told me about him? Answer me that.”

“But, my dear Mrs. G.,” said the apothecary in a tone closely allied to a whine, “I have nothing to tell.”

“Pooh!” ejaculated Mrs. Grimes. “Don’t, pray don’t heap wickedness upon your immortal soul. It has enough to bear already, take my word for it.”

“Upon my honor I haven’t, Margaret,” touchingly asserted the apothecary, for his eyes were moist even to tears.

“I need not say that, placing as I do, so small a moiety of faith in your honor, Mr Grimes,” returned she, “it’s quite useless, and consequently unnecessary, to try to win my confidence by any such appeal. Reserve your honor, Sir, for misguided individuals not so intimately acquainted with you as myself.”

The apothecary had nothing further to say. His honor was at a discount.

“It’s the way with all you men, you lords of the creation,” resumed Mrs. Grimes with a laugh of a nature somewhat hysterical, “whenever it happens to be convenient to keep your secrets from the full shareholders of your misfortunes, but rare participators in your pleasures and junketings, you swear upon your honors that there is nothing to tell. Ugh, you pigs!”

The apothecary had given up. Since his honor was at a discount, he had nothing further to say.

“When you became an Odd Fellow,” continued Mrs. Grimes with a repetition of the hysterical laugh, “not that there was any great necessity to render your general absurdity more conspicuous by joining a whole society of Odd Fellows—it was my particular wish to learn the secret which,

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time out of mind, has been known to belong to masonic institutions; but you told me there was nothing in it."

"Nor was there, Margaret," said the doctor, breaking silence again. "It behoves me to assure you that there was no secret whatever to communicate."

"Catch me believing that!" ejaculated Mrs. Grimes. "Why, haven't I heard of sculls, coffins, and red-hot pokers, opening your eyes to the light, and all that sort of thing? And yet you'd have the assurance to lie in your bed, and tell me there's nothing in it? Upon my word, Sir, I should not be surprised to feel you slipping through the sacking. It's enough to make it open and devour you."

The apothecary wished heartily that the surgery bell might ring without a moment's delay, and he began to devise means of

setting the clapper going himself. Such is the mutability of human desires.

“It is, however,” continued Mrs. Grimes, “with your visit to the Oaks I have now to do, and not with masonic institutions. Whom did you see there?”

“The Squire,” replied the doctor, who now became conscious that he was about being subjected to a vigorous course of examination, quite out of his power to parry or retreat from.

“Only the Squire?”

“Nobody else, Margaret,” rejoined the apothecary, “as I hope to be saved.”

“Then the question’s in a nutshell,” added Mrs. Grimes. “What did he say?”

“He told me that he had a fulness of blood—”

“Fiddle-sticks!” interposed Mrs. Grimes; “I want to know nothing about his blood, or any such nonsense. Did he speak of his

unfortunate wife? for being a wife, she must be unfortunate, irrespective of the peculiar hardships of *her* case."

"No, Margaret, he did not," replied the apothecary. "I should not have known that he'd been in the possession of a wife from anything—"

"But he is not in the possession of a wife," interrupted Mrs. Grimes, with undisguised triumph, "and he may now, perhaps, be aware what the value of a wife is. I should recommend *you*, Sir, to discover the worth, before being placed in a similar position."

What the apothecary's wishes were at this juncture shall not be divulged.

"Am I to understand then," said Mrs. Grimes, "taking up the thread of her subject, "that nothing passed, or was referred to, concerning the late dark mystery?"

"Not a sentence," responded the doctor.

“And that you call taking advantage of an opportunity, do you, Mr. Grimes? I really should be ashamed of myself if I were you, I should indeed.”

“Oh, that that bell would ring!”

“You felt his pulse, I dare say,” resumed Mrs. Grimes, with confidence in the correctness of her anticipation. “I’ve no doubt you felt his pulse.”

“I certainly did,” admitted the doctor.

“Exactly so,” rejoined Mrs. Grimes; “I thought I shouldn’t be very far out. And so, by your own confession, it appears that you can stand, or sit, as the case may be, feeling a patient’s pulse, without worming out a single notion from his repository. If I had been similarly situated,” continued she, drawing her breath through her teeth, “I’d have turned him inside—”

Hurrah!

The surgery bell rang as if it designed to awaken a past generation of sleepers.

Mrs. Grimes was cut short, the apothecary rushed off, and the cricket chirruped loudly on the hearth.

CHAPTER XL

It was a bright and sunny morning in the blustering month of March—that Bacchanal who pipes before the flowers of spring. The gorse on the heath looked like a field of gold, and the air was loaded with the fragrant incense of a thousand flowers. On bough, twig, and spray, the birds warbled their songs of gladness, and the lark, soaring from the ground, trilled his notes in seeming ecstasy.

Upon a sloping piece of ground, facing the south, and sheltered by a high and

thick hawthorn hedge from the wind, which ever and anon swept in gusts through wood and field, sat Corporal Crump, the old Peninsular, and Leonard. Some twenty yards distant a double net was spread, and here and there small square cages placed with call-birds in them, consisting of goldfinches, linnets, and redpoles. A few were allowed to fly and twitter at the ends of slight tethers attached to stakes driven in the ground—poor counterfeits of liberty.

As an angler watches his float, so the old Peninsular bent an earnest gaze upon the occasional flight of a songster which, tempted by the allurements of the syren-like prisoners, hovered around the trammels prepared for its capture. Perfect, however, as the arrangements were, if Bill Stumpit was to be believed—and his full cages at Paradise Lodge in great measure supported the allegation—each one seemed suspicious that

Outward appearances were not to be trusted, and, after a cursory inspection, winged its flight to scenes anew.

“They must be old birds, I think,” observed the Corporal, as a particularly crafty hedge-sparrow made perfect sport of the old Peninsular by openly defying his several attempts to get the net over him; “they must be old birds,” repeated he, “I think, for devil a one is to be caught by chaff.”

“The sun dazzles me,” replied Bill Stumpit in a humour rendered testy from repeated failures.

“Hasn’t the moon as much to do with it?” asked his companion, looking out of the corners of his eyes, without turning his head.

The old Peninsular gave no reply to this satirical query, but watching a moment when the crafty hedge-sparrow was off his

guard, he pulled the string, and there the too confident bird struggled and fluttered in vain within the meshes of the net.

“I’ve got him at last,” shouted Bill Stumpit exultingly, and hastening towards his prisoner, as fast as his bit of British oak would permit, he soon secured it within the bars of a prison-house.

In silence, with his sad, pale, melancholy face turned upwards, watching, it appeared, the light, fleecy clouds skimming before the wind, Leonard sat musingly. His silken locks waved about his shoulders as the breeze toyed with them, and the delicate child-like expression—an expression which made the passer-by and stranger feel pity for him; but why they knew not—remained the same, although year rolled on year.

With others, and everything around him, Time went on; but with Leonard he stopped his hour glass, and what was helpless and

young—very young—remained so. None had watched him as his mother had, and she, day by day, saw the frail plant gaining neither strength nor nurture in the growth, and what remained of hope that ripening years might bring, appeared, alas! too hopeless now.

“Come, Sir,” said the old Peninsular, placing his rough and solitary hand upon Leonard’s shoulder, “there are no skylarks up there just now,” and he pointed with his hook to the sky above their heads.

“But see how beautiful it is!” exclaimed Leonard, still keeping his looks fixed on the firmament. “Depth within depth of eternal space in which countless orbs revolve, each with a sun, and a Godhead for the whole!”

The boy’s cheeks flushed as he spoke, and an unnatural fire darted from his eyes like one inspired.

" Worlds, perhaps, like this," continued he; " for where there is light I'm taught there must be life, and what more perfect than the life breathed into man by the Creator, fashioned by His hand from the image of Himself? Something often whispers to me that it is in those realms, where, purged from mortal suffering and sin, we love one another and live again."

" That's not speaking like one who's cranny, is it?" whispered Bill Stumpit.

" He sometimes talks in that way," replied the Corporal, in the same suppressed tone. " It's a sort of dreamy style which makes his mother, poor thing, cry to hear him; but for my part I rather like it than otherwise."

" Then we mustn't encourage him in the dreamy style," rejoined the old Peninsular. " No more crying in Paradise, while I'm head fiddler."

“Don’t take any notice of him just now,” returned Corporal Crump. “He’s better left to himself.”

“As you say, so let it be then,” added Bill Stumpit, and he dropped himself by the side of his companions with rather too sudden a movement for their individual safety, as the bit of British oak jerked up, and as nearly as possible made a double knock upon their respective prominent features.

“You’ll take care of ’em, Bill, when I’m gone,” said the Corporal, “I know.”

“To be sure I will,” replied the old Peninsular; “but you must stop much longer, Dicky, to show me how. It takes a good while, d’ye see, to learn a chicken o’ my age how to swim.”

“I must be off to head-quarters soon,” rejoined the Corporal. “I’ve been away

some time now, and matters don't mend there, according to report."

"But why not bring the whole lot of 'em to Paradise?" asked Bill Stumpit. "It's made of a sort of India rubber, and the more you put into it, the more it will stretch. A regiment of heavies would never fill it."

"If it were possible to billet 'em as you propose," returned the Corporal, "there's one, you know, it would kill now to bear a short hour's march, let her be carried in one's arms even like a baby. She's going, Bill," continued he with emotion, which he strove fruitlessly to hide; "Mrs. Somerset's going as fast as the clock can well run down. I've seen that for many a month past."

"Under these circumstances, then," added the old Peninsular, "I mustn't ask too much. It only shows though," continued he, "how a man with a shifting limb, or two, may

console his friends. Now, if you were in my condition, Dicky," continued he, "with a substitute, why you could leave your leg behind, and what a comfort that would be to look at with an afternoon's bit of backy. I could rejoice with such company, I could, indeed!"

"There's no accounting for tastes, certainly," said Corporal Crump; "but I never heard of a lamentation before, because a friend couldn't leave his leg behind him."

"It only shows what my feeling is towards you, old Butt-an'-muzzle," responded the veteran, seizing the corporal by the hand, and letting him understand by incontrovertible evidence that he possessed the average strength of eight fingers and two thumbs in half that number. "It's a further proof of what my tough old heart feels for ye, Dicky. I could hug your timber leg, if you wore one."

vision, and shook away a tear.

“ But as I was saying,” continued Crump, “ you’ll keep him out of his way. I’m sure,” and he pointed to Leon with upturned face, seemed to be with his own reflections, “ and not come to him. We don’t know what we may do in this world. It makes the weak, and the weak strong, and we wonder than can be registered in volume. Perhaps we may live to see a young sapling there flourish, although robust from an acorn ; but made weak and bowed down and timorous by the

the old Peninsular, raising his hand and hook with horror. "Don't tell me that."

"Not exactly, perhaps," replied the Corporal. "I won't say they went so far as to tie him up and lay it on as we've seen it done, Bill. But it is not always that the greatest pain goes through the skin. There are a good many other tormentors quite as sharp as the cat."

"That there are," rejoined the veteran, "and the luckiest in this world catch the cat in some shape or other, if it is not for the most part in knotted hemp."

"True, very true," returned Corporal Crump, "and the seams, sometimes, never come out. It may be so there," continued he, again pointing to Leonard, who sat without noticing what was said or done, "but as I before said, the hope is in time and kindness."

"He shall not even feel the wind if it be

rough!" ejaculated the old Peninsular with enthusiasm.

"You have heard his simple story, Bill," remarked the Corporal, "and if not profitable here, as many a seed sown is a long time bearing fruit, yet for every act of kindness, for every deed performed to others as we would they should do unto us, brings its reward, as certain as the showers and sunshine of heaven produce the flowers around us."

"You're not talking to me about profits, Richard Crump, are ye?" returned the old Peninsular with his eye suddenly glowing like a red-hot coal. "You don't suppose that *I* take in lodgers to bed and board 'em, in order that I may pocket the cheese-parings, do ye? I'm not rolling in riches," continued he, in spite of the corporal's strenuous efforts to check him. "I never said I was. But a man can be as liberal

with a sixpence, Richard Crump, as he can
 with a guinea. It is not the amount of our
 possessions, for that mayn't depend exactly
 upon our deserts or want of them; but if we
 bestow freely of what we have, it's all that
 can be expected either of rich or poor; and
 that I do, have done, and will do as long as
 I've got a bit of British oak to stand on—
 hang me!"

"If you won't let me speak," hallooed
 the Corporal, "I'll unship your bit of British
 oak and try which of the two is hardest,
 that, or your thick old figure head. I have
 heard," continued he, reprovingly, "that
 when the brains are out, the man dies, but
 that doesn't appear to be always the case."

"Perhaps I did not quite make out your
 meaning, Dicky," said the veteran, con-
 siderably crest-fallen. "I was always a bit
 of a fool from my birth."

"Ah!" returned Corporal Crump, "I

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forgot that. You may suppose to have
kissed my hand. But come, the birds will
never be caught in your net to-day, I can
prophesy. Let us take a homeward march.

CHAPTER XII.

HE was foiled—Tobias Woodbee was foiled by her who, in the plenitude of his authority and rule, he thought would sooner have laid herself prostrate at his feet, and fawned upon them. All that maddened rage could say or do, had been said and done. He discharged his servants—the knight of the muscles excepted—as accomplices in the elopement of his wife and son, placarded every post-gate and wall in the neighbourhood with a faithful description of their persons, and advertised handsome and

liberal rewards for their discovery. Messengers were despatched in every probable, and, indeed, improbable direction, in quest of the fugitives; but to the most strenuous endeavours, backed by lavish expenditure and unflagging perseverance, all trace of them ceased at the Bull Inn, Aldgate. It proved, however, like those proverbial winds, which, blowing evil to some, blow good to others, a source of considerable profit to the night-porter of that ancient hostelrie; for the number of half-crowns and crowns he received, to repeat continually what little he knew of the extraordinary passengers by the mail, who arrived there on a cold, bleak, February night, and wanted nothing, not even a pair of slippers, added greatly to his provident store in the savings-bank.

But to his praise be it spoken, he made no abridgment of the facts, and, as if re-

solved to afford as much as he possibly could for the money, he went into the minutest details of their proceedings, even to the unimportant one of Corporal Crump—or what was naturally supposed to be that popular individual—rubbing the end of his nose with so much energy, that he appeared to be putting a French polish on the surface.

The expressed design of driving to Turnham Green wound up the narrative, and so ended the night-porter's information of all within the category of his knowledge, and, perhaps, a little over; for some allowance must be made for the parsley of a story, otherwise the garnishing.

Such had been the acute means observed by the corporal in checking the hot pursuit which he anticipated would be commenced, as soon as the discovery was made of their departure, that had they ascended in the

Nassau balloon, upon leaving the Bull Inn, Aldgate, or sunk a few score fathoms beneath the earth's surface, nothing less of the trace of how they went, or where they went, could by any reasonable possibility have been left behind.

Squire Woodbee was at fault, Dr. Starkie, with all his cunning, was at fault, and every agent and means employed were as much baffled as hounds may be imagined, in days to come, should foxes ever be given to mount, and wing an aerial course. No letters, no messengers, nothing and no one either came or went, as far as was known, by which the smallest clue could be formed of their retreat, and if the attempts for discovering it were not abandoned, each successive step brought them no nearer to the mark.

It was a mystery, and one too likely, from all appearances to the contrary, to

remain clogged with impenetrable darkness.

It was night, and Tobias Woodbee sat before his desolate fireside, turning over in his thoughts the material events of his life: he had laboured hard, and he had laboured long. The early days of youth were passed in drudgery, in daily work which made his heart heavy to begin, and his limbs weary to complete. Years of unintermitting struggles, of anxiety, and self-denial, and the aim was attained—he was rich. He rode over those who rode over him, commanded where he was bidden, and felt the truth of that which he never doubted—money was power. Selfish, however, as he was, and “of the earth most earthy,” yet his pride was of a cast above that generally found in minds trained as his had been. He hoped to be the stock-root, the foundation of a line which should lift its head, like

the cedar-top, above the common herd, and contemplated with ambitious satisfaction that when he individually had ceased to be, what he had toiled so arduously for would still remain a monument for future ages.

In his son he expected to see the stepping-stone to the consummation so devoutly to be wished for, and felt the bitter gall of disappointment when Leonard's tutor, the Oxford double-first prize-man so constantly intimated that there was little progress in the child's mental improvement. He had always regarded an obstacle to his wishes with a feeling akin to hatred, and, wanting the finer sensibilities of the parent, he soon began to entertain morose sentiments towards the boy, and to exercise the severest tyranny towards him.

In the belief that his wife's fondness and indulgence materially assisted to thwart the measures for making Leonard a scholar, he

at last interdicted their being together, except for a short time in the evening, and then only if Doctor Starkie could give an assurance that the tasks were done, and done well. The hours for relaxation were shortened until the whole day was occupied in study; and Leonard's pale cheek might be seen bent over an open page from the rising of the sun to its going down. He often took his books to bed, and started in feverish dreams, with the ogre's face turned savagely upon him, to thrust his hands under the pillow and begin to murmur the half-finished task of yesterday—that which prevented his kissing his mother's cheek before seeking his pillow to bathe it with his tears.

Fruitless were the entreaties of Mrs. Woodbee for a mitigation of the harshness. In vain she represented the failing health and energies of her child, and pleaded, as a mother only can, for the idol of her affec-

tions. A deaf ear was turned to all she urged, and frequently threats of even a severer course held out if she presumed to interfere.

Neither were these menaces mere idle ebullitions of temper. As time wore on, Doctor Starkie's complaints and ominous shrugs of the shoulders increased, and fanned the coal of Squire Woodbee's daily augmenting chagrin. He tried what effect his presence would have upon Leonard's attention, and being unable to restrain his anger, when confusion rendered the poor trembling lad incapable of answering the simplest question, blows, loud, cruel blows were struck.

Rendered all but mad at these daily scenes, Mrs. Woodbee made a final appeal to Dr. Starkie, and then learned, if not all, sufficient reason—unparalleled as it might be in the atrociousness of its design—for

the systematic barbarity exercised towards Leonard. Herself, the mother, was the price. His eyes declared it by the devilish fire darting from them, if it were possible that doubt should be construed in his words and actions. With a woman's quick perception she saw the wily villain's design, and with the promptness of a resolute but fluttering heart, determined to frustrate it. The loathing thought sickened her, that in the form of man there should be a thing so desperately wicked. Could it be true, or was it some hideous phantom of her overheated brain? To save him, her child, she was to—horror of horrors!

She would not tell her husband the truth as it had broken upon her. It would be useless if she did. Wild, improbable, and without the slightest proof, who could believe her tale? They would call her mad, perhaps, and not hesitate to treat her as

one whose brain was warped. What was to be done? Her lips compressed with the thought, and when she separated them, a light streak of blood upon the lower one, told how earnest it had been.

Flight!

There was joy in the word. Fly! yes, she would fly—she knew not where; but he, Leonard, would be with her, and what was the world beside!

A few hurried lines were written, justifying the course she had taken; night came on, and they were gone.

The hour was late, and still Tobias Woodbee sat before his desolate fireside, turning over, in his thoughts, the material events of his life.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR a full hour not a word had been spoken; but like a spirit of evil Dr. Starkie remained watching his companion in silence, as if he would read what was passing within. Sitting close to the black marble chimney-piece, the Oxford double-first prize-man rubbed his forehead against the polished stone with a slow methodical action, and looked like a piece of mechanism, as he faced the taciturn Squire of the Oaks.

“Starkie,” at length ejaculated Tobias Woodbee, with sudden and most unex-

pected energy, as he drew himself erect in his chair, "I'll tell you a story."

The doctor expressed himself as being a far more willing listener than had been met with since the wife of Menelaus occasioned the Trojan war.

"You never heard—indeed could not hear as far as I know—the history of my marriage?" continued the Squire, in the form of an interrogative.

A flush spread over the doctor's forehead. It might be from friction.

"No," replied he, shading his eyes for a moment with a hand, "I am unacquainted with every incident connected with it, my dear Sir, both generally and particularly. Nothing could give me greater pleasure or interest than to listen to the narrative," and there was the parenthesis as strong as ever.

"It's a strange tale," returned the Squire,

throwing his head on to the back of his easy chair, and looking at the ceiling above him with a kind of smile which seemed as if not furnished direct from the spring of happiness. "It's a strange tale," repeated he, "and one which may sound like a romance, but—pshaw! I need not say that it's true, whatever the opinions of others may be."

For the purpose, perhaps, of collecting or arranging his ideas, Squire Woodbee did not break the commencement of his story at once; but remained in the same position, and with the same smile upon his features.

"People who are poor, and of course miserable," at length said he, "are always at war with the rich. By some unaccountable self-esteem which poverty seems to possess, she claims the virtues as her sole offspring, while vice is assigned without limitation as the attribute of her opposite

neighbour wealth. So far, however, from this being the case, Starkie, if I may judge from my own experience, this is nothing more nor less than envy in her most naked form. High vice, and refined sins, spring from luxury without doubt; but the common order of offences against morality and the state, may be traced to one general source—poverty. Whatever may be the inclination, poverty sets at open defiance the practical exercise of many virtues, and renders the majority of the remainder exceedingly doubtful of attainment."

"I am completely of your opinion, my dear Sir," replied the Oxford double-first prize-man. "Virtue in rags," and the doctor smiled so that every tooth was exposed, "is merely an ideal image, or at most a light under a bushel. Once let it be seen, and temptation soon changes its nature."

“I was led to make this introduction,” resumed the Squire, raising a hand as a signal that he wished to be listened to without interruption, “from the feelings *I* entertained in early life towards those who were better off than myself. I hated them, Starkie,” continued he, and the veins swelled upon his forehead as he spoke, “hated them to a man. The causes of their wealth I always traced to villainy or accident of some kind or other, and could have justified any act by which it would have been wrested from them. Remember *I* was poor then, and these are the feelings—hide them as they may—which the poor entertain towards the rich.”

Doctor Starkie made no remark, but tapping gently one of the arms of his chair, slight sounds came from it not unlike that favourite air the devil's tattoo.

“As you know,” continued Tobias

Woodbee, "I make no concealment of what I was. I am no better, but quite as good as nineteen-twentieths of the original stuff from which the best families in England have sprung. Without the shop what should we be—what should we have been ?

It is money that has made us, Starkie; not that won or made in isolated cases, or the collected capital of gigantic firms, leased by the care, judgment, and thrift of successive generations, forming, what we are pleased to call, the fortunes of our Merchant Princes. It is the money of the masses, the stake which the many possess ; and hence, our love of order, submission, and obedience to the laws and rightful authority.

With us there is both the aristocracy and democracy of trade ; but the strength is with the latter."

Doctor Starkie was not prepared for a

disquisition upon political and commercial economy ; but he looked resigned, and maintained a strict silence.

“He is dead now,” said the Squire, musingly ; “but not many years since there was a great man on 'Change, one whose reputed wealth and position made him an object of adulation and worship, and sycophants were ever bowing at the shrine—among them myself.”

The Oxford double-first prize-man started, and looked toward the speaker inquiringly, as if in doubt at what he heard.

“And sycophants,” repeated Tobias Woodbee, slowly, “were ever bowing at the shrine—among them myself. But I hated him, Starkie,” continued he, as the veins again roped across his brow, “with the envy of a heart burning to be what he was. I know not how or why he came to occupy my thoughts, but sleeping or waking I

dreamt of this man, and his power was ~~the~~ which I longed to grasp.

At the time of which I am speaking, I was little noticed by far less important persons, and he had but a slight visionary idea that we had ever met before, when once we parted, although, perhaps, but the short date of yesterday intervened.

In short, he was the great man on 'Change, I a nobody.

Revolving years, however, bring revolving changes. I grew rich, and, knowing it, took care that others should know it, too. He, the great man on 'Change, became poor, and knowing it, did all in his power to prevent the information from spreading beyond the limits of his own breast. We were being worked upon by exactly opposite causes, and yet these brought us together in closer union than, at one time, could have been conjectured possible. He wanted

h, the great man on 'Change was
e!" and Tobias Woodbee struck
on the edge of his seat, and pressed
e blood faded from the nail.

storm thickened, clouds lowered
house, but no expenditure was re-
no scheme abandoned, no venture

Ruin gradually stole upon him
arkness of night falling around;
till remained the great man on

now, being unable to do without
I became his constant guest, and

honored never feasted in a man-
ain luxury reigned paramount. It

the feet sink in as if treading upon moss, and brocaded drapery hung in heavy folds about the windows, fringed with bullion and the richest lace. Large and costly mirrors stood against the walls from floor to ceiling, reflecting models from Italy in alabaster, collections of Sèvres china, curious carvings in ivory, buhl cabinets, and bronze casts, pictures of the choicest kind, and a countless variety of articles of vertu, made the whole look as if the earth had been searched to bring the most beautiful things together.

In this saloon, which appeared like a scene of enchantment, I first was introduced to his two daughters and only children. Young, handsome, accomplished, and supposed inheritors of immense wealth, you will easily believe what crowds of triflers, admirers, and speculators they attracted around them, and that I, acquainted with the state of their father's affairs, assumed an inde—

pendence of tone and manner which would be likely to both astonish and offend the heiresses of the great man on 'Change. To the unintermitting and almost exclusive attention which I took pleasure in forcing their haughty parent to pay me, in the presence of his guests, they were wont to exchange looks of mingled surprise and contempt, and often essayed to give vent to their indignation by making me understand, at least, that I should receive, at their hands, not the slightest mark.

This was what I desired, knowing as I did that they must bend to me like wands of willow whenever I chose, I inwardly rejoiced to see the stiff-necked beauties' indifference, and measured the moment for humiliating them, when it would most contribute to the gratification of my pride.

I have reason to remember well when that moment arrived. One night the saloon

was crowded with beauty, fashion, and wealth, and among the most beautiful, none looked more so than the daughters of the great man on 'Change. Bearing a close resemblance to each other, and dressed alike, they formed the principal objects of attraction, and the buzz of compliments and flattery might be heard in every quarter. The eldest, Ellen, was standing by the side of a young man holding a commission in the army, and from the marked attention paid, and the manner in which they were received, I concluded, and concluded rightly, that in him I saw a favoured suitor. I can admit now, as I might then, that a finer figure I never saw than in this young soldier, and as they stood preparing for the dance, it was the general remark how strikingly handsome they appeared.

A wild burst of music broke upon the ear. A few more chords, and they would

have been whirling in the throng, when taking an arm of the great man on 'Change, as if it belonged to me, I sauntered through the crowd close to where they were standing, and claimed her as my partner.

'Indeed, Sir,' she replied, drawing back with head erect, and eyes flashing with surprise and anger, '*I* am not entitled to that honor.'

'We are occasionally,' replied I, 'both forgetful and indifferent to our engagements. This gentleman will, I am sure, give place.'

'That must depend, Sir,' he rejoined, folding his arms across his breast, and measuring me from heel to head with a proud, defying look, 'upon the decision of the lady.'

Without making an observation, I turned a cold, expressive eye upon her father, who at once settled the point at issue.

'Ellen,' said he, taking her hand, which ~~had~~ was rested upon the young officer's arm, ~~and~~ 'my friend—my particular friend here—— cannot —must not be denied.'

The incident may sound trifling in itself ~~and~~ but the sensation at the time can scarcely ~~be~~ ly be described. She saw that there was some ~~se~~ something then which gave me the power to d ~~do~~ as I pleased, and perceiving her father ~~and~~ her humbling himself in apologising to th ~~at~~ he young officer, whose cheek and lips were ~~ere~~ blanched with anger, as he was led into ~~to~~ a corner, she tremblingly yielded her hand ~~and~~ to mine, and I stood, for the first time i ~~in~~ in my life, before the most brilliant assembl ~~ly~~ I yet had mingled with, the proudest ~~of~~ of the proud. All eyes were turned toward ~~ds~~ us, and I gave look for look."

Tobias Woodbee rubbed his hands, an ~~and~~ glanced smilingly at the ceiling above h ~~is~~ is head, as if the satisfaction which th ~~ere~~ e

thought engendered was as fresh as ever.

“ The explanation which was given,” continued the Squire, “ or what passed between the tottering merchant and his daughters, I never knew, or sought to inquire. But from that day forth I took the ground which I intended to occupy. Even the menials appeared to know that I must be considered before every one, and I liked to make the dogs cringe, and seem ready to lie at my feet, that I might walk over their necks rough-shod if it pleased me.

It's money that makes the man, Starkie. Without it he is a slave.

For the object which I have in view, I shall not trace, step by step, the advance of my authority and power in the family of the great man on 'Change. Enough for the purpose will it be to state, that one word of mine, at any moment, would have broken

the bubble, and that on my breath his very existence depended.

I am not one of that mole-eyed tribe, Starkie," continued Tobias Woodbee, "given to the weakness of stooping to pick up nothing. That is for the employment of the universal family of fools, and it has ever been one of my strenuous efforts to prove that I am not closely allied to those serious detrimentals to the human race.

A fool may be compared to a blown egg. Let it be, and it is useless; crush it, and it is nothing.

While he was gradually sliding towards the pit yawning to swallow him and his magnificence, I took care that what was ruin to him, should be productive of profit to me. By degrees the best of his possessions became mine, and, almost imperceptibly, I took the place, as if to realize my dream, which he once held. He still,

however, remained the great man on 'Change.

Few like me attach themselves to falling fortunes; but the rats leave before the ship sinks, Starkie. If there be anything beyond the frothy romance of full-grown children in that hackneyed sentiment, so commonly denominated love, I never knew what it was, and therefore in saying, that I wished, designed, or intended to make the eldest daughter of the great man on 'Change my wife, it must not be supposed that I was in love with her. She was beautiful, and being so, I admired her; but the great attraction—the loadstone to my heart—was the making her mine against her will, the winning her all the world to nothing! Caged birds sing, Starkie, after a while.

What I proposed could not be rejected. She was to be mine, and arrangements com-

menced for making her so without delay. The young soldier, he whose place I usurped on the night of the dance, no longer appeared in the saloon, and, although it was said that she became paler and more pensive as our marriage approached, I had no reason to think but that she felt perfect resignation to her fate—a becoming and desirable feeling for all who are not in a condition to help themselves.

Great were the preparations, and lavish the expenditure, which heralded the wedding day, and early on that eventful morning, I was thinking of the interest and compound interest of the investments in pearls, diamonds, silks, satins, and lace, when a messenger arrived, breathless with haste, to summon me to the house of the great man on 'Change.

What was the matter?

He did not know, he could not tell.

Something had happened, and I was wanted instantly.'

As speedily as possible I obeyed the call, and was met by my intended father-in-law in the entrance, looking as ghastly white as a spectre. His lips were bloodless, and he trembled from head to foot like one stricken with the palsy.

In silence he took me by the hand, and leading me into an adjoining room closed the door, and fell upon his knees before me.

'For Heaven's sake!' he said, holding up his hands—you would not have recognised the great man on 'Change—'For Heaven's sake,' repeated he, 'do not suspect me in having any share in what has taken place! Indeed I am innocent, innocent of everything,' and then he wept like a child, still, you'll remember, kneeling at my feet.

It required no great powers of perception to see that something extraordinary

had occurred, and the coming event was not without its shadow.

‘You are about telling me,’ replied I, ‘that Ellen refuses to become my wife?’

‘She has gone,’ rejoined he, in a choked voice, ‘and by this time is the wife of another.’

‘That, therefore, places the matter beyond the reach of possibility,’ returned I, with a coolness of manner which seemed to stagger him. ‘When did she leave, and with whom?’

‘This letter will explain all,’ said he, offering me one, and assisting him to rise. I found, in a long rambling story in which she endeavoured to justify herself, that my betrothed had taken flight with Lieutenant Somerset, the handsome soldier and disconcerted hero of the dance.

At this distance of time it is unnecessary for me to enter into the particular state of

feelings upon the subject; but I shall confine myself to the simple and brief narration of the facts as they occurred.

In no very gentle terms, perhaps, I gave expression to what I thought of the treatment I had received, and gave the great man an opportunity to understand that the Gazette waited him with the same certainty as his trial. He pleaded, of course, for mercy—the last resource in all desperate cases—and I peremptorily declined to extend the boon.

Raising his voice imprudently—taking for granted it was far from his wish that everybody in the house should be acquainted with what appeared designed only for my ears—his second daughter, Alice, entered the room, and commenced the task of assuaging the grief of her parent. She was a pretty and gentle girl, and never, to my eyes, looked to greater advantage than now,

when using her best efforts to raise the prostrate energies of the heart and soul of the great man on 'Change.

She would have knelt at my feet, to ~~do~~ but I prevented that.

'Pray, Sir,' said she, addressing me, '~~be~~ merciful, as you hope for mercy! That you have been wronged, grievously wronged, I know full well; but how far nobler is forgiveness to revenge! All may resent ~~an~~ injury. The worst among us can do ~~that~~ with aptness of word and deed. To forgive belongs to nobler natures.'

'And do you believe me capable of ~~ex~~ercising the power which you attribute to nobler natures?' inquired I.

'I hope so,' was the reply.

We are easily flattered if the time and opportunity be fitting.

Human motives are wheels within wheels. I had mine, beyond the mere spur

of the moment or circumstance; but both were favoured by the inclination. All was prepared, and as a mere matter of choice the youngest daughter would have been quite as acceptable to me as the eldest, when I first resolved to ally myself to the family of the great man on 'Change.

With little preface to the subject—it was not needed, Starkie, as my bill-book reminded me at the moment—I proposed that Alice should be decked in the bridal dress prepared for her sister, and that all things should proceed as if she had been the selected of my choice.

If I remember rightly there were a few tears, and an hour's delay for becoming hesitation; but a special licence surmounted the remaining difficulty, and not one of the crowd before the portico of St. George's, Hanover Square, that morning, could have guessed that the young girl, crowned with

save her father.

There is but little more to add
Within a month of our marriage,
and thus was saved from the fate
dreaded more than death. With
nought that he could call his own, I
spoke of him as the great man of
and so passed another bubble by
world is gulled by appearances."

Tobias Woodbee seemed to have
at the termination of his story, fell
gradually dropped, and he marked
word with a loud snap of a
thumb.

exceedingly imprudent, not to say disgraceful young person, who eloped at so extraordinary a moment, to the great scandal of her sex and name?"

"Her husband was shot for an act of cowardice, I believe," replied the Squire; "but from that day to this, I never felt sufficient interest to learn anything positive about her or him. I forbade all communication between the sisters, and I have no cause to think that my command was broken; but shallow as women may be, Starkie, they are often deeper than we take them for."

The doctor appeared to coincide entirely with this sentiment, silent as was the expression; for his fingers played nimbly, and more nimbly still on the arm of his chair; but the notes were muffled, although they still seemed belonging to the devil's tattoo.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN luxuries it was not Miss Baxter's lot to indulge; but, at the precise moment of her re-appearance before the footlights of public notice, she was engaged in toasting a muffin.

The little kettle—that hissing and spluttering kettle—stood on the top bar of the economical - condensed - coal - consuming grate, which never could have been crammed with more than a fourth of a peck of the finest pounded Wall's End that ever wind wafted in the shape of dingy dust, and seemed to

vomiting forth an unbroken cloud of
pour into the very jaws of Miss Baxter,
with a pleasure partaking of considerable
enjoyment. Miss Baxter's patience and equani-
mity of temper, however, were proof against
such impotent attack, and she evinced
utmost stoical indifference towards the
hissing, spluttering kettle, by steadily
pursuing her purpose to its completion.

The muffin was browned.

With a cup of souchong, or it might be
tea, held from time to time to her lips,
reading favorite of the juvenile sprout-
deas in and around that locality, to
the historical associations of the most
interesting kind will henceforth attach, began
to bear so peaceful an air of perfect con-
sistent contentment, that it was more than refreshing
to the eye. Miss Baxter had had a long
day that day, and her multifarious duties,
weighed by a kind of sliding scale, from

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teaching words of one syllable, to the magnificent use of the globes, occasioned an exhaustion of the system, both mental and physical, of which effects she was duly sensible.

Miss Baxter sipped a second cup, caused the toasted and buttered muffin to vanish by a most natural process, and added to the list of her self-confessional admissions by observing, that she felt better.

By a strange fatality—and that it was a decree of the three weird sisters, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos—no one could for a moment doubt, it appeared that Miss Baxter's evenings at home were not to be allowed to pass without a stirring scene, now and then, as a relief, perhaps, to their general monotony.

Scarcely had she announced a decided improvement in those flagging sensations which required gently stimulating only to

regain a healthful tone, than every symptom returned with prostrating effect, as a knock, an unexpected, mysterious knock, was visited upon the outer door of her domicile.

Miss Baxter glanced at the little skewer of a poker, which chanced to be red-hot, but her heart failed her notwithstanding.

The knock was repeated.

The least firm of nerve can sometimes accomplish deeds which would quail the stoutest of hearts.

Miss Baxter clutched the poker from the bars and advanced.

“Who’s there?” inquired she, endeavouring to steady a voice which betrayed a strong tendency to shake.

“A friend!” was the reply, hoarsely whispered through the keyhole.

Under other circumstances Miss Baxter might have smiled at the absurd attempt

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to tamper with her credulence. Friend indeed! but the poker cooled quickly, and consequently much of its terror was being lost.

“Your business?”

“To speak with you.”

“What about?”

“Those you love.”

Miss Baxter's heart leaped like a strong trout at a May-fly.

“Their names—tell me whom you mean,” quickly rejoined she.

“Leonard—”

Not another word. Imprudent, nay rash as the act undoubtedly was for unprotected a female, Miss Baxter whisked back bolt and bars, and, without taking the precaution of peeping, threw open the door wide upon its hinges, and there stood a figure which, concealed as it was by a shawl muffled round the throat, and the

“Yes, and even nose, concealed by a brigandish-looking hat, at once struck her vision as not being unfamiliar.

“I hope to see Miss Baxter,” said the mysterious wearer of the brigandish-looking hat, making a step forward, “as well as an old friend could wish;” and lifting the extinguisher from the upper stories of his countenance, there was Corporal Crump, as fresh as a green pea that morning gathered.

“Gracious goodness!” ejaculated Miss Baxter, placing her hands upon her bosom, to keep in check, by pressure, the rising emotions. “I almost thought so, if not quite. Be still, my heart. Pardon me, gallant Sir! Be seated, pray. Confusion renders me confused. I—I—I—” and the little, simple-hearted gentlewoman’s feelings ran over in a current of briny tears.

The corporal had distinguished himself

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by many a bolder act, but it is questionable whether that defender and supporter of his country's honor had ever displayed more considerate kindness than in his prompt attempt to soothe the excited feelings of the little, forlorn, old governess, who, as he recollected with great force at the moment, could waste but few of her tears, if a limited quantity only in this life is permitted to be shed.

“Both are quite charming,” said he, “and I left 'em as happy as singing birds, with which, as you'll hear in process of time, they're surrounded. There's no occasion to cry, Miss Baxter, I do assure you, and if you can listen to me, without giving way, I'll tell you all about them as quick as words can be turned off the tongue.”

Miss Baxter admitted that she could scarcely command sufficient politeness to offer Corporal Crump refreshment, as a pre-

liminary to furnishing her with the information, so eager was she to learn the particulars; but would he take a cup of tea and a muffin?

The son of Mars excused himself politely, from what otherwise would have been a decided infliction, and taking a chair opposite to the economical-condensed-coal-consuming grate, facing Miss Baxter's, he acquainted her with every detail of interest connected with Leonard and her friend Alice, and poured such a stream of facts into her willing ears, as threatened to swamp her very powers of hearing.

Miss Christina Baxter's face brightened like burnished copper as the corporal's narrative proceeded, and by the time he brought the particulars—of which the reader is already acquainted—to an end, there was not a vestige or trace of that

current in, around, or about the source ~~to~~ which tears are commonly assigned.

“ I thank Heaven to have lived to hear that they are comfortable!” devoutly exclaimed Miss Baxter. “ What a love of a man Mr. William Stumpit must be!” she continued with unqualified admiration. “ I could kiss his wooden leg, gallant Sir—I could, with a pleasure not easily described.”

“ He’s the remains of a good soldier and honest, noble-hearted man, Marm,” rejoined the Corporal. “ There isn’t much of him left; but what there is, so superior quality can’t be found between here and a three weeks’ march.”

“ And Leonard, you tell me, improves?”

“ I think so, Miss Baxter,” returned Corporal Crump, and his words sounded as if not meant by way of mere consolation to his hearer. “ My hopes and belief are,” continued he, “ that the old Peninsular,

Paradise Lodge, and linnets, the air of the vale, no books, and a few weeks' more freedom from the Devil's own and—"

"Bluebeard," added Miss Starkie, as her finest stroke and keenest edge of satire. "I like to call the elder Woodbee Bluebeard, gallant Sir. It seems, upon occasions, to relieve a weight," and she pressed a hand upon her bosom to indicate, probably, the precise spot from whence oppression was so removed.

"So be it then," said the Corporal, "Bluebeard we'll call him; and it's my opinion that a few weeks' more freedom from the small—excuse me, Marm, if I name the place particularly—hell, in which he was apt simmering, that Master Leonard will hold his head up yet like a rose in June, and be an ornament to the world at large and his part of it, perhaps, in particular."

"He still remains silent and given to that

any-dreaming which caused me so much anxiety?" observed Miss Baxter with her eyes closed.

"I'm sorry to say, Marm," replied Corporal Crump, with a shake of the head - "he has not given up the bad habit of thinking yet. I wish he had; but notwithstanding that, he takes more notice of the birds than formerly, and, with a laugh, sets Bill Scumprit to shake hands with his book, which all looks improving and healthy."

"And Alice is happier?" rejoined Miss Baxter, with her eyes still shut, as if a visit of a truly pleasant kind was palpable within.

"It was only yesterday morning that I heard her sing," returned the old soldier.

"You'll oblige me, Marm, by remembering that fact. It may froth up your spirits," continued he. "when a little flat, perhaps."

Miss Baxter was not likely to forget so

important, so pleasing an incident. It was quite a treasure for memory's hoard.

"While here," resumed the Corporal, "which will not be long at a time, for I must try to make a split vote of myself just now, I shall only come out with the bats; for I understand Mr. Bluebeard, as we'll now call him, is having a sharp look out kept upon everybody's movements."

"Ah!" sighed Miss Baxter. "No words can convey—the power of language is inadequate to express—what I suffered from the repeated examinations and cross-examinations—and particularly cross ones some of them were; gallant Sir, I assure ye—at the hands of Mr. Bluebeard and his arch counsellor Dr. Starkie. Having interfered so lately on the behalf of the afflicted and persecuted dears, I was suspected of being the chief instigator of their flight, and generalissimo of the entire proceedings. My

innocence," continued Miss Baxter, "had not the slightest weight, and my answers to these inquisitors, so far from satisfying or pacifying them, only roused their savage natures to frenzy. I knew nothing, I repeatedly stated that I knew nothing, whatever about the fortunate escape of the afflicted and persecuted dears from thralldom—for fortunate I persisted in calling it even to their faces—and, at length, finding that it was impossible to learn anything from me, they took a final departure, with a strong expression, concerning the total void of truth in my statement."

"I don't wish to come to close quarters with either of those worthies," observed Corporal Crump, with a martial frown knitting his brows. "I have promised not to do so, and for the sake of those I'll protect as long as I've got arms to my shoulders, I'll use my best endeavours to keep my

Word. But if I *should* be found out, or any **C**hance brings us together, there'll be some **S**harp work, Marin, as sure as powder burns **Q**uickly."

"Avoid extremes, gallant Sir," said Miss **B**axter, entreatingly, "if within the **C**ompass of practicability. Sharp work rarely **D**oes much good; but often a great deal of **H**arm. May I ask how you travelled?"

"In a return fish-van masked by a pile of hampers," replied the old soldier, "and if I get rid of the smell of herrings within the next month I shall consider myself one of the most fortunate of men. There's not a cat in the neighbourhood but will come mewling about me, I know."

"How long do you intend remaining?" asked Miss Baxter.

"That depends upon circumstances and not my own choice," said the Corporal. "Poor Miss Clara," continued he, "is sadly

down of heart and wants more of fear, than is in my knapsack to [] Then there's my missis wasting aw our eyes like a pinch of snow in [] It won't be long before that bra troubled heart is at rest, Marm, at to witness the closing scene, for I wanted, d'ye see, at such a moment Little Jacob, too, he's all sizes an and whimpers that I mustn't le any more, or an impulse to stick into a treacle-tub may come o again."

"Is there no one else in whom an equal interest?" slyly put in Miss for report had been busy in the vill Corporal Crump and Mistress Twi long time past.

The old soldier rose hastily from at these words, and buttoning his c corresponding speed observed, "

company makes time fly fast. I must bid you good night, Marm."

"Do not be in haste, gallant Sir," rejoined Miss Baxter.

But there was no stopping Corporal Crump, and he took his departure with the military abruptness of "quick march."

CHAPTER XV.

“HOPE deferred maketh the heart sick,” and the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork felt the truth of the proverb to the greatest possible extent.

The days dragged their weary lengths along, and each one seemed a month at least, but the “creeping in of petty space” produced no ghost of Corporal Crump, let alone the more welcome material and solid substance of that martial spirit.

He had left her! The thought was an agonizing one; but there existed not the

Slightest peg to hang a doubt upon concerning the stern character of the fact. He had left her!

How often Mistress Twigg masticated those monosyllabic words! Still, with a fond, reposing woman's hopes, she thought he would return. Yes, yes, Jonathan's pleasing prophecy would yet be realized. Having gone up the road, as the chronicle of the past pointed with unerring finger, he would come down again, of that she entertained a positive assurance. But notwithstanding the powerful nature of the faith Mistress Twigg fostered upon this particular branch of the subject, it was most tantalizing that she received no intimation of the probable time of the corporal's advent; it was most tantalizing that no explanation arrived from him, directly or indirectly, respecting the causes of his prolonged absence; and it was more than usually tantalizing that the

doubts and fears by which the widow was beset, met with no satisfactory elucidation from any one or anything.

To-morrow and to-morrow, and all the to-morrows of Mistress Twigg were like her yesterdays.

It was night, and the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork sat in the bar-parlour, ruminating upon the undisguised source of her discomfiture, with an expression pertaining more to sorrow than anger, when Jacob Giles made an appearance which, for the eccentricity of the general style, rather—to fall back upon nautical phraseology in expressing the astonishment of Mistress Twigg—took the wind out of her sails.

With one step forwards, then two in retreat, now peering to the right, then to the left, it may probably be conjectured that the little general shopkeeper occupied

Considerable time in making good the smallest ground in advance.

"Is anybody here?" said he, at length reaching whispering distance between himself and Mistress Twigg.

"Not the apple of the eye of anybody," replied the widow in the same tone; for it would appear that whispers begot whispers, by the natural code of propagation.

"You are sure?" rejoined Jacob, lifting a forefinger.

"Certain," returned the widow, and her heart palpitated more quickly than its wont; but why she could not tell, and consequently fortunate that she was not asked.

Upon the extreme tips of his toes Jacob Giles disappeared for the nonce, and, with an absence of so brief a duration that it is supposed he did not proceed further than the neighbouring door-post, again came forward leading a form which, at a superficial

glance, bore a singularly strong resemblance to an animated figure of Guy Fawkes.

After the bare statement, that within the limits of a few seconds Mistress Twigg was caught in the arms of Corporal Crump, a veil shall be drawn across the picture, at least for a short period.

“You’re back at last, then?” exclaimed the buxom widow, holding the corporal at arm’s length only, as it appeared, to again unite herself with him in the fervour of devotion. “They told me that he’d come down the road again, and here he is!”

The old soldier evinced much pleasure at the warmth of his reception; but not desirous, perhaps, of being over-heated, disentangled himself from the widow’s embrace by a gentle persuasive force, which left her scarcely sensible of the separation.

“We mustn’t be taken by surprise,” remarked the old soldier, disencumbering

himself from the brigandish-looking hat and other portions of his very complete disguise. "Somebody may be dropping in presently."

"I'll close the shutters, shut the door, and put the candles out," replied Mistress Twigg.

"No, no," rejoined the Corporal, for he had an objection to gloom under the most trying circumstances, and the widow's proposition, consequently, failed to meet with his approval. "There's not any occasion to go those lengths, Charlotte;"—the reader will observe that he was growing familiar—"but if you'll let me draw the curtains so"—suited the action to the word—"and sit with my back to the bar thus"—dropping himself into the old arm-chair—"I think every precaution, necessary for masking me from the approach of the enemy, will be observed."

“You’ll not permit a *crea*-ture to come inside the bar, Mem,” said Jacob Giles, delivering himself in a manner which may be described as the very essence of the enigmatical.

“Not a saint, Mr. Giles,” returned Mistress Twigg, “if the best in the calendar was to present himself for admission. But—” —and she turned upon Corporal Crump a reproachful look—“before I can quite forgive ye, I must be—”

“Stand before us, Jacob,” interrupted the old soldier, and seizing Mistress Twigg round her portly waist, he caused a sound to emanate from the region of her lips which clicked like the meeting of flint and steel.

The little general shopkeeper had emotions, but he placed a strong check upon them, and did as he was bidden.

The widow was naturally surprised at

Corporal Crump's presumption, and begged it to be distinctly understood that she meant nothing of the sort. She was about to add, that before she could quite forgive him, she—

“Stand before us, Jacob,” was the reiterated command of Corporal Crump, and again Mistress Twigg found herself caught in an embrace which was not to be resisted or avoided.

The hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork arranged her slightly-disordered cap; and it may be observed, as a proof that the Fates were propitious, it chanced to be newly trimmed that day.

Upon her plighted word—so she said—it was quite impossible to foresee to what lengths the military would go, and begged to be believed that had her consent been asked, as a preliminary to the proceeding, it would have been withheld. It was wonder-

ful, so it was, that any one could be so bold, and for her part she wondered where liberties would cease. A chaste salute, with a handkerchief or towel between the two pairs of lips, might be all very well; but when it came to —”

“Stand before us, Jacob,” again cried the Corporal, and the residue of the sentence was cut short by a rehearsal of the former obstruction.

There was no repulsing Corporal Crump. He was a naughty, rude man, as the widow distinctly informed him; but reformation in his conduct being hopeless, she would not flatter or deceive herself by false expectations. No; it would be better to abandon the design altogether, and for the future, take things quietly. That appeared to her the most reasonable method, and one likely to save a world of trouble.

To draw a foaming tankard of her own

particular, and hand it to the old soldier with a countenance creaming with the heart's delight, to hear her hospitable request that he would wet his lips with that, while she proceeded to mix something better, and to witness her alacrity in carrying into effect her own proposition, were circumstances of note, and worthy of applause.

“Only to think that you should come down the road to-night,” ejaculated Mistress Twigg, beginning to mingle some ingredients together in a pleasant-looking china bowl, of those exact dimensions which rendered it neither too large to be unhandy, nor too small to be mean. A sweet, savoury cloud rose like incense from its depths, and he must have been more or less than man who could remain carelessly indifferent to the effects. “Only to think that you should come down the road to-

night," repeated the widow in the act of squeezing a lime. "Where have you been, rover?"

By putting this question, it must not be inferred that that which everybody knew, was unknown to Mistress Twigg. The accusation would be unfair, nay more, unjust, to say that she was one of the most inquisitive or curious of her sex; but in all that regarded the corporal it was nothing more than truly natural that she should be desirous of learning all she could. It is true that the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork had exercised her ingenuity in this respect, and therefore the proximate cause of his absence, as assigned by the popular voice, was as well known to her as the veriest busybody—that mercurial being eve to be found in the most secluded communities—in the vicinity of Grundy's Green. At the same time it was her wish

to have the tale from the fountain head, with the ins and outs, ramifications and et-ceteras, which now presented itself with the maiden opportunity.

The elocutionary powers of Corporal Crump were assisted by the nectar brewed by Mistress Twigg's own hands, and he acquitted himself in the required recital with satisfaction to himself, and the greatest pleasure to the hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork. The account rendered of himself was all that could be wished, and the balance left greatly in his favour.

Nothing could be more agreeable than the time as it flew rapidly by. Jacob listened attentively to every word, although from the movement of his lips, he seemed to be anticipating each one as it fell, and if repetition gives facility to those wondrous powers of memory in man, he doubtlessly possessed every advantage

which that assistance can render. He marked the sentences by grave nods, and stopped the composition generally with commas, periods, and semicolons, through the medium of his glass, which he raised to his lips as often as occasion required, and this, it must be admitted, seemed pretty frequently, as if the stops were being thrown through a pepper-caster.

In total ignorance of the weighty and important secret contained within the walls of the bar-parlour, like a pill in a box, the regular or nightly customers at the Harrow and Pitchfork were astounded at the altered manner of the hostess. She supplied their wants with a vague, mysterious air, and instead of the familiar inquiry concerning their health and prosperity, or the old jokes, painted and varnished with a freshness which no one would discover

from their pristine hue, they were cut short as a carrot, and left with an abruptness never before witnessed by the oldest frequenter. Many marvelled, but none could explain.

At length—and the only surprise is that it was not heard before—the hearty greeting of Burly James, as he approached the bar with a swagger of considerable ease, caused a sensation of no small magnitude within a few feet of that locality, albeit he was in blissful ignorance of the fact.

“Come, widder,” hallooed the knight of the muscles, “I know you’re a-dyin’ to see *me*! Let’s have a pull at your own particular; for I shouldn’t be surprised but what it’ll have to be *me* at last.”

“How shall I get rid of the cannibal?” said Mistress Twigg in an under tone. “He considers it a privilege to take his nightly pot in the bar parlour.”

"As a last resource," replied Jacob Gilt, grave as a judge when not engaged in making puns and himself ridiculous, "as a last resource, Mem," repeated he, "say you have particular business which doesn't require a witness."

The hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork thus primed hastened to arrive at a settlement with Mr. James Burly.

"As usual?" said the widow, looking down her nose, but not at Mr. Burly.

When she thought it expedient, nothing could be more freezing than the deportment of Mistress Twigg.

"The same, Ma'am," rejoined the knight of the muscles, beginning to pioneer his way towards the tabooed spot; but the widow made a clever dodge and kept him back.

James Burly thought the obstruction to be the mere result of accident, and again attempted to pass the barrier; but there

was the widow, and necessity compelled him to come to a check.

"There's your beer, Sir," returned Mistress Twigg with an icy manner which could not fail to chill. "The charge is forp'nce."

James Burly stared.

"There's your beer, Sir; the charge is forp'nce," muttered he.

"If *you* please," added the widow, still directing her glances down the sides of her nose.

Burly James began to reason within himself, as to "what he'd been and done," and felt at a great loss to account for what he both saw and heard.

"Have I co-mitted any o-fence, Ma'am?" asked he, taking the tankard from Mistress Twigg, in exchange for the "forp'nce," with as flabby and crest-fallen an air as was ever testified in the knight of the rueful coun-

The widow did not wish to insist anything of the sort. Her was it from her heart to wound the feelings of an unwilling customer; but all persons had the right to refuse to attend to, and she held that another night she should be proud, and would be happy, and happy as she would be proud, to see Mr. Busby in the bar-parlor but just then—Missus Twigg smiled like a widow who knew something of making a man—
—“she was engaged.”

Busby James held forth a thick dark hand, shook Missus Twigg by a corresponding member with energy, if not with violence, and after temporarily burying himself from the world in the tankard, rose again, and took his departure in contemplative silence.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE tree stricken by the lightning's stroke often stands for years, although scarcely a green twig on its seared and cankered branches announces that there is yet vitality within. A puff of the winter's wind, however, comes, and down the wreck of the forest is laid, an emblem of what the sorrows and struggles of life may bring. The spirit bears against the fell swoop which the heavy hand of misfortune visits so remorselessly upon it, and buoyed with hope, that most heavenly of sensibilities, bravely breasts the

storm. Wearied at length by continued efforts, like a strong swimmer with more than he can accomplish, despair takes possession of the heart, and then it is that the puff of the winter's wind comes, and completes the ruin.

Separated from her sister, that solace which hitherto had softened much of the affliction in the thought that she must soon leave her child so young and unprotected, Mrs. Somerset's cup of misery was full to overflowing.

From the night they had parted, it was perceptible to all who saw her, that the hectic flush upon her face glowed more brightly, and the little amount of strength she possessed became sensibly decreased. The cough, too, that frequent harbinger of coming death, rendered her sleepless during the long dark hours of night, and then it was that she tossed rest-

lessly on her couch, and prayed for patience and submission.

Clara never quitted her mother. Day and night she was by her side, ready, as she hoped, to render any assistance that might be required; but "nature's gentle nurse" rocked her into forgetfulness against her will, and the mother, stooping over her sleeping form, breathed many a supplication, which angels carried on their pinions of light to where Mercy sits, that her orphan might be guarded from all harm and danger, and that when the hour of parting came, a voice might whisper they should meet again.

From the day of their arrival in Grundy's Green, the greatest kindness and sympathy were entertained towards Mrs. Somerset and Clara, and, strange to say, the title of the Belle of the Village, assigned to the young and pretty stranger by universal assent, in

no way gave rise to those feelings of jealousy which the probable rivalry for that distinction might be suspected likely to cause. There had ever been a slight web of mystery about them, which time itself had not entirely dispersed; but without this, perhaps, the same degree of romance would not have attached to them, and as all were agreed that more blameless lives were never spent, they were both beloved and respected by young and old, and always spoken of, as the good lady and her pretty daughter.

Even the noisy, whooping boys stilled their boisterous mirth in passing the little general shopkeeper's snugery, for they remembered that the good lady looked more pale than usual, and as she sat at the window, some would doff their hats, and others make their bows by pulling the square cut hair, hanging in rugged masses, upon their sun-burnt foreheads.

Neither was there wanting in the more solid proof of the consideration in which the invalid was held. The most beautiful flowers that cottage garden grew, the freshest of eggs, the pullet which roosted next the cock, the first of the churn, the earliest strawberries, and a long list of offerings, too numerous to particularise, continually were presented at the general shop, with a hope that they might be productive of more benefit than appeared within the reach of the apothecary's specifics.

It is a matter of congratulation that Jacob Giles had been thrifty, and was well to do in the world, otherwise the prodigious nature of the return presents, which he persisted in making, must have sent him through the Gazette. His largeness of heart knew no bounds where his feelings were concerned, and he has been known to give away a whole Cheshire cheese for a bunch of primroses.

The May blossoms studded the bush, and the note of the thrush sounded clear from one of the topmost sprays of the elm, as he cheered his mate on the nest hard by, while the long shadows thrown upon the ground by the setting sun, told that it was an evening in early summer, bright, beautiful, and fleeting.

Mrs. Somerset lay upon the couch before the closed window of Jacob's snugery, watching the happy faces of the village children as they passed. Clara sat at her feet, looking also at the groups returning homewards; but her thoughts were engrossed with other subjects, and her fixed, vacant stare gave proof that she saw not that which her eyes were fixed upon.

"You are thinking, dearest," said her mother, "tell me of what?"

A mantling blush tinged Clara's cheeks as the request was made.

"Of those we love," replied she, her eyes brightening with tears, but not one stole from the lids. "Of those, dear mother," continued she, "whom to be near, is to be happy, and to be away from, is to be sad."

"Would that we could be with them," rejoined Mrs. Somerset, "and were it possible, this night should not pass without our again being together. I feel, I know, Clara, that the attempt, if made, must end in disappointment, if not in something far more serious; for if even my feeble condition would bear the fatigue of the journey—"

"It should not be tried for worlds!" interrupted Clara.

"I was going to add, dearest," continued Mrs. Somerset, "that even if this was to be accomplished, the movement would doubtlessly lead to discovery; for such is the watchfulness of the many agents employed,

that we should be traced inch by inch on our journey, and never lost sight of."

"I am sure of that," rejoined Clara
"and I quite tremble to think what may be the result of the corporal's being the occasional messenger between us."

"He is so truly an old soldier, when he thinks proper to assume that character, returned Mrs. Somerset, smiling, "that I possess the greatest confidence in his ability to frustrate every manœuvre which may be attempted in the event, even, of its being learned that he is here."

"He is quite the terror of poor Bridget," said Clara with a laugh which, alas! had not been often heard in the snugery of late. "From the way he has of hiding himself behind the doors, peeping through keyholes, and tripping about the house on his tiptoes, in various articles of dress, designed to hide both his face and figure, as

much as possible, she entertains the suspicion that he has committed some diabolical murder, and momentarily expects the officers of justice to capture him."

"Has he cherished this dread by any statement of his own?" inquired Mrs. Somerset, amused with what she heard.

"So Bridget says," replied Clara, "by estimating that his life is in her hands, and upon her secrecy that most important of his possessions depends."

"I suppose then," rejoined her mother, "that the poor old creature is afraid to speak one word about him."

"To none but me," returned Clara, "will she open her lips respecting the corporal, having made a vow to seal them forever on the subject, or until, at least, she receives a special release. The confessional itself could not extort the secret from Bridget."

"We may safely depend, then, upon her

silence," added Mrs. Somerset, "and with prudence escape the danger which his presence here threatens. I cannot, however, divest myself of the fear that he will yet be discovered."

"But that may not necessarily lead to the detection of my poor aunt and Leonard," said Clara.

"Certainly not necessarily," observed her mother, "but it would lead, doubtlessly, to a renewal of that rigour with which the search has been made, and no foresight can decide what the result might be."

"O Mamma!" ejaculated Clara, clasping her hands together, "what would become of them—of us—if they were to fall into the power of their cruel persecutors again?"

"I tremble to think," responded Mrs. Somerset; "but we'll hope that Heaven may guard them from such a calamity!"

"And yet, dear mother," remarked Clara, reflectively, "how unnatural does it sound

hat we should pray for a wife and child to be kept from the shelter of home, and protection of their kindred!"

"But how much more unnatural that there should be any cause for such a prayer!" returned Mrs. Somerset. "The duty owing to a father and mother is a command from God himself; but it seems too often forgotten that they have an account to render of their stewardship. If the ensample be not offered of love and acknowledgment to authority, of setting precepts in the practice and government of their own households, of showing by their lives how they observe the duties due by themselves, how can they expect the honor and reverence of their children? If we hope to receive, we must also give. In looking for the performance of services to ourselves, let us first search our hearts diligently, and learn how far we may have achieved those which form our own tribute."

CHAPTER XVII.

It would be difficult to paint, even were a pencil with the finest point employed, the chary, intricate manner in which the old Peninsular guarded the trust reposed in him, during the absence of Corporal Crump from Paradise Lodge. With great reluctance he was induced, after many postponements, to consent to the apparent necessity of his friend's departure, and when this had taken place, upon the express condition of as speedy a return as circumstances would permit, the strictness of Bill Stumpit's watch and ward began.

Woodbee and Leonard under his keen, watchful eye, and the more effective protection of a broomstick, which he invariably shouldered in readiness for action, the old Peninsular entertained a lively faith that he was strictly accomplishing that which England is stated to unreasonably expect from every man—his duty.

Captives as they were, the goldfinches, linnets, and larks, sang right merrily in Paradise Lodge, and discordant as the notes might be from the multitude of warbling throats engaged in the choir, and each occupied, it is supposed, in anything but observing the laws of harmony, yet after getting used to the din, which required some little experience to an untutored ear, the noise was not quite deafening, although it required the voice to be raised to a straining pitch for anything else to be heard, provided the feathered family—to use the

Peninsular's expression—was in full

feathered family became an object of interest with Leonard, although a mild hint that he might set a few of the fresh-; prisoners free, now and then, puzzled the proprietor of the bit of British oak and the common powers of description. He did not, however, in what was left of Bill's hint to refuse his young, pale, and feeble guest anything; but when he finally interfered with the net profits of his business in letting a fine cock linnet go to his native woods again, and thereby caused a loss, a clear loss to the old man, of, perhaps, a full ninepence, no wonder that the old Peninsular shook his head and sighed deeply.

He began to ask himself, at such moments,

where the canary seed was to come from? it was, as a rule, it would appear, in commercial

transactions, that when the profits do not present themselves with that distinct visibility, which may be desired by those principally interested, thoughts arise as to the resources from whence the disbursements are to be derived.

Leonard, however, had his own way, and many a linnet, and other denizen of the wild, had reason to be grateful to him for that boon, precious to man as to the mouse—sweet liberty.

No one could doubt that a progressive improvement was taking place in the health and strength, both of the body and mind of Leonard Woodbee. His clear blue eye no longer wore that leaden expression which tells of a brain oppressed, and thoughts sorrow, and if his cheek still wore an ashy hue, there was a lightness in his step he strolled o'er hill and dale by his mother's side, which she had not witnessed since

was a little happy child. He oftener now, too, spoke of various objects which seemed to interest him, and no longer maintained that listless indifference to all that was passing around. Scarcely a day passed without a perceptible improvement of some kind, till, at length, jokes of a practical kind began to be played off, by an unseen hand, upon the old Peninsular; the most inconvenient of which was the abstraction of the bit of British oak from its place in the corner of his dormitory, during a more than usually heavy slumber, and its being found, after a most diligent search, stuck in the middle of the centre flower bed in the front garden, labelled "an everlasting pea."

Bill Stumpit felt the shadow of trouble steal over his spirits from the prolonged absence of this essential to his locomotive powers; but upon the loss being made good, nothing remained but his pro-

found admiration at the bit of fun which appeared to tickle his risible sensibilities to an extent scarcely credible.

“An everlasting pea!” exclaimed the old Peninsular, folding his arm and hook across his breast. “There can’t be many screws loose in a head that could come that. If *I* was to live to be as old as Saul—I believe it was Saul,” continued he, reflectively, “who is said to have been the most agedest man that ever lived—I should never possess a thought burnished as bright as that. An everlasting pea!”

It was a great idea, and Bill Stumpit paid due homage to the conception.

The sun was up brightly in the heavens, and the rakish wind breathed a tale to the flowers, as he swept with soft dalliance from bud to blossom. The laughing morn, decked in “kirtle sheen,” danced from the hill top, and, like a beauty vain of her

as, made every stream her looking-

Dull sleepers she awoke with the
of bird and bee, for this was a right
day with her, a summer's holiday.

gether, as was their wont in many a year
by, Mrs. Woodbee and Leonard strolled
the undulated heath towards some gipsy
pitched in a spot which seemed to have
chosen for artistic beauty. Within some
yards the old Peninsular, armed
the broomstick, covered their rear, and
used the greatest vigilance in sweeping
orizon, from time to time, with a hand
ing his eye, as if to make assurance
y sure that there was no enemy in

or the suspicious appearance of one.
e satisfaction, however, both of the
l and the guarded, nothing presented
to interrupt their progress, and five
x wiry curs, of various sizes, and no
ular breed, but each wearing a most

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vagabond appearance, rushed forward and announced, by noisy menaces, that they could come no nearer to the encampment without special leave and license.

“Back, there, back!” cried a voice sternly, and the yelping, vagabond crew, with perfect submission to authority, expressed in their drooping heads and tails, slunk back to their places round a smouldering fire, as if to watch the cauldron suspended over it, and whet their appetites with the odorous steam curling from its depths.

“They’ll not hurt ye, my sweet young gentleman,” said an old crone, crawling from under a tent on her hands and knees and, as she stopped to scan the stranger with a scrutinizing gaze, she looked like a toad just emerging from its antediluvian cell. Yellow and wrinkled, with a nose and chin almost in unity, and her small black eyes glistening as brightly as the reptile’s

spoken of, she seemed to belong to those who

“So withered, and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants o’ the earth,
And yet are on’t.”

Leonard stared at the hag with feelings akin to dread, and was turning from the spot, when her voice, raised in a shrill, piping tone, riveted him to where he stood.

“Stay, stay!” hallooed she, scrambling with difficulty to her feet, and tottering forward with both hands clasped on a crutch stick. “Stay, stay, I’d speak wi’ ye. Old Martha ’d speak wi’ ye,” and the crone staggered towards them, repeating these words.

“Let us go, mother,” said Leonard, in an under tone. “I don’t wish her to speak to me.”

“Another time, my good woman,” said

Mrs. Woodbee, turning away. "We'll speak with you another day."

"Another day!" shrieked the beldame, raising a knotty long finger belonging to a hand which looked like a mummy's. "Another day? Is it you, then, that can tell Martha there'll be another day? Who made you so wise? Ho, ho, but we shall have old heads on young shoulders presently!"

Both the words and manner of the gipsy were far from pleasing; but opposed as it was to their inclination, Mrs. Woodbee and Leonard waited until she hobbled close to them.

"Ho, ho!" repeated she, resting on her stick, and fixing her glistening eyes upon them, "it's brave to talk of another day, when the night comes between, and who can tell what that may bring? The owl and the bat know, the 'oute things; but

mortals sleep o' nights, and often never wake to another day."

"Come, Mother Scarecrow," remarked Bill Stumpit, seeing the effect being produced on Leonard's nerves was anything but a beneficial one, "we don't want any more o' that nonsense. Keep it for those who'll pay for it."

The hag turned anything but a friendly look upon the old Peninsular, but gave him no reply.

"Cross Martha's hand with a bit o' silver, lady," continued she, changing her tone, "and she'll tell what fate awaits ye. Trouble does not always follow us, although it may track us for awhile. We all have our sorrows, lady, and the skeleton's at every feast. You've had yours; I can read that without looking at the palm of your white hand; but cross Martha's with a bit

of silver, and she'll open the future for you, lady, like a book."

"There's the money," replied Mrs. Woodbee, dropping the coin into the gipsy's bony hand; "but I'll not trouble you to reveal my destiny," continued she with a faint smile.

"A poor old woman's blessing go wi' ye, my lady," rejoined Martha, dropping a curtsey. "They may say it's of no value," said she again, holding up her knotted finger as if to call attention to her words, "but don't believe them. Our tribe came from where the sun rises, far, far away," continued the sybil, pointing to the east, "and ages have fled since then; but there are tales among us now of what has been seen—ay, seen—in those days when the blessings of the poor were thought more of than now, and their curses feared, too. Words are but words; but if the heart speaks, lady," she

paused, and looking stedfastly at her hearers, added, "*it is faith.*"

"Say what you like," returned that heretic Bill Stumpit, "it's a devilish dear sixpenn'orth."

By this time a troop of ragged, shoeless, brown-skinned children had collected, clamouring for alms, and greatly added to the inclination of the strangers to be free from the vicinity of the gipsy's camp.

After gaining some short distance, Mrs. Woodbee turned her head to view the picturesque scene, and in doing so her eye fell upon a figure dressed in black which, the moment she saw it, struck an icy chill through her bosom.

With difficulty she suppressed the involuntary exclamation which rose to her lips; but she could not remove her eyes from the object.

"What are you looking at, mother?" in-

quired Leonard, casting his looks in the same direction.

"Nothing!" quickly added she, and pointing in another way, she directed his attention to the beauty of the landscape.

Trembling, however, in every nerve, she could ill conceal the state of trepidation which she had been thrown, and her frequent glances in the rear soon caught her attention.

"I begin to think," said he "that the gipsy's words have produced greater effect than she herself could have hoped."

"No, no," replied Mrs. Woodbee, drawing a hand across her eyes, "but I feel very faint."

In the briefest time in which the object could be accomplished, the old Peninsular martial hat was filled with limpid water from a neighbouring rill, and he offered to bathe her temples with a cherished

CHAPTER XVIII.

UPON returning homewards, and when within view of that celestial residence, Paradise Lodge, Martha the gipsy was perceived standing at the barricaded gate, as if waiting for their approach.

“Why, if there isn’t that Mother Scarecrow keeping watch at our gate!” ejaculated Bill Stumpit. “What can she want I should like to know?”

“To give my mother some message from the Fates,” replied Leonard, laughing, “provided the messenger receives a fee.”

The old crone stood with the hood of a faded scarlet cloak, in which there was many a tatter, drawn over her head, and with her long, skinny hands resting on her polished ebony stick, she remained motionless.

“What are you here for?” said Bill Stumpit, in no gentle mood that the gipsy should present herself at the entrance of his *sanctum sanctorum*.

“Come,” continued he, authoritatively, “budge, or I shall lose my temper, perhaps, presently, and when that’s the case, no one can tell what may happen.”

“Ho, ho!” returned the hag, with her eyes flashing upon the old Peninsular. “What! would you drive me from your door like a dog?”

“Stay, stay,” interposed Mrs. Woodbee. “If you are in want,” continued she, turning to the gipsy, “and I can supply what

you require, name what it is, and then take your departure in peace."

"Gentle words, good lady," rejoined the crone, "always make old Martha's rage die within her. Wants with such as me are few, and, whatever they may be, don't last long."

"Say what your present one is?" returned Mrs. Woodbee.

"To speak with you, my lady," replied Martha, "and with no one near."

"I said so," added Leonard in a bantering tone. "I said that it was a message from the Fates."

"Ay," responded the hag, with her glistening eyes bent upon him, "and it may be one, young Sir, in which *you* are not forgotten."

However vague these words might be, there appeared a meaning in them, by the way they were delivered, which was not

lost upon Mrs. Woodbee. To yield to the request would seem a weakness, and yet she felt impelled to conform to it.

"You wish to speak to me alone?" said she, as if pondering upon the words.

"Alone," replied old Martha, "but not for long."

"The request is a strange one," rejoined Mrs. Woodbee, "and yet I feel disposed to grant it."

"Oh! pray hear her, mother," returned Leonard, free from his former fear of the prophetess, for the healthy notion took hasty possession of his brain, that, after all, she was but an old woman. "Oh! pray hear her," repeated he, "for who knows what mine of happiness she may reveal?"

"A mine of nonsense!" muttered Bill Stumpit, for he was angry now with more than old Martha.

Leaving the old Peninsular and Leonard

at the gate of Paradise Lodge, Mrs. Woodbee followed the crone, who hobbled before her, until they came to a secluded spot when she stopped, and glancing round, said "Come close, I've something for you."

"For me?" returned Mrs. Woodbee.

"Yes," added the gipsy; "but listen. Soon after you left, a gentleman came to me—a real gentleman, mind ye, for he crossed old Martha's hand with a half-crown piece—and asked if I knew you and your son, and where ye lived, and a great many more questions, some of which I could answer and some not, and after a while he went away. Presently he returned, and giving me this," continued she, showing a letter from beneath the folds of her cloak, "crossed my hand with another broad silver piece—a real gentleman," continued the crone, "and told me to take it to you and say, with no one by, that if you valued one

fe more than your own, to read and think
ell on what was written o' the inside."

The figure then was no conjuration of the
Lency.

Her brain reeled.

"Heaven have mercy on me!" exclaimed
Mrs. Woodbee, in a voice so convulsed with
sorrow that the gipsy was touched with
compassion.

"Don't take on so, dear lady," said she
commiseratingly. "I would not, for twice
the money, have been the bearer of evil to
one so gentle and so good. Shall I take the
letter back?" continued she. "He's to be at
the camp by the time I return."

"No, no," quickly replied Mrs. Wood-
bee, "give it me; I'll—I'll do as he wishes
me."

"May I tell him so?" inquired the old
crone.

"Yes," rejoined Mrs. Woodbee, as if

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scarcely conscious of what she was saying.

“You may tell him so.”

The letter was in her hand.—she scarcely knew how it came there—and Martha, without adding another word, took her departure across the heath, towards the encampment.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE Oxford double-first prize-man was not of that ilk easily to be repulsed. Difficulty with him only stimulated his exertions, and an object worthy of his attainment—or what he deemed to be such—was never lost, however far, or long, it might have been from his sight. The word “fail” had found no place in his lexicon, and he only laughed at obstacles which, with other men, would have turned them a thousand times defeated.

With little repose—having but one object

in view, and in possessing which all his thoughts and energies were concentrated—Dr. Starkie strove day and night to discover Alice Woodbee's place of refuge. It was with no intention, it is almost needless to say, however, to further the views of her husband, in any way, that he used such unremitting perseverance. He cared as much about the mental cultivation of his pupil as the science of alchemy, and would as soon, and perhaps sooner, have seen him a confirmed and babbling idiot as the first philosopher of the day. For in truth there was a latent feeling of—it is difficult to say what; but when Dr. Starkie's glance fell occasionally upon Leonard, it bore so devilish a look, withal, that little less than hatred could have been the fountain from whence the feeling emanated. He remembered at such times as these that the boy was no son of his, and a hot, burning

pang shot like lightning through his breast to think that another possessed the claim of father.

Undisciplined of heart, sceptical of the responsibility of sin, and with a mind fortified with the plausible arguments of infidelity, the Oxford double-first prize-man had little inclination to restrain the fierce impulses of passion. Love with him—if such a term may be applied—knew no bounds or limits. Whatever his desires were he would gratify at any cost and every hazard. Licensed or unlicensed, he recked nothing of the deed or its consequences. Possession was the object, and to attain that he derided all laws, both human and divine.

The tyrannous course which he had pursued towards Leonard he deemed the most politic one to be adopted for eventually obtaining the mastership of his mother's will. He knew full well that he could not

win her affection, notwithstanding the little cause there existed of her entertaining much towards him she called husband. But Doctor Starkie felt that she was above, far above the call of his lure, and if the prize was to be won, it was to be won only through no common means. Through the sympathies for her child—the belief that she would sacrifice anything and everything for him—he continued daily, month by month, his systematic cruelty to Leonard, in order that she might be a suppliant to him for mercy. More than once she had been so; but the hour had not come when her heart would be as melted wax. He knew, however, that come it must; but like many a cunning coward, in the moment of anticipated triumph, he forgot how desperate the weakest may become.

That look, that haughty, indignant, withering look, would haunt him to his

dying moment, and, perhaps, stronger than than ever; but although before his eyes, sleeping and waking, it checked no thought—quenched no desire.

She was gone—that maddened him. Had she dragged him before her husband, and denounced him as the traitorous wretch he felt himself to be, in terms more eloquent than the poetry of truth ever yet was uttered in, Doctor Starkie could have answered the accusation with a smile, and justified himself.

What he *could* have said had long been ready, for he had learned the expediency of being forearmed; but he was not prepared for the flight of his victim. That baulked him, and he found himself outwitted.

In the letter which she had written to her husband, apprising him of her departure upon that memorable night, not a word had been mentioned of his conduct of the morn-

ing. He was not surprised at that, and not the less pleased, for although the accusation, as he knew, would have been laughed at as a mere invention and excuse for removing her child from the thralldom of which he was so constantly complaining, yet it was better, as the wily Jesuit felt, that nothing should arise to cause the shadow of suspicion of his ends and purposes. The value of still, quiet, deep measures was well understood by Doctor Starkie.

In the countless stories, too, circulated by as many tongues as the inhabitants of that division of the county possessed, no mention had been made, as far as he could discover, of his name being associated with anything more than as Leonard's taskmaster. In connection with this duty he learned that the reports were not particularly flattering to his humanity, and the greater number of them contained strong

doubts, in equally strong language, as to his possessing a single spark of that most admirable of qualities.

For these rumours, however, the Oxford double-first prize-man entertained the most supreme contempt and indifference, and such was his total disregard of censure, that had the offer been made, he would quite as soon have been blamed for harshness, as applauded for its opposite.

Doctor Starkie, in the absence of the founder of that school of philosophy known as stoicism, might be considered, at least, in the light of a stout and uncompromising supporter.

Satisfied, beyond a doubt, that Alice had kept the secret to herself, the discovery of which had frightened her—yes, that was the word—frightened her from her home, to meet death itself rather than remain; he augured well of the state of things so far,

and concluded that the exercise of some ingenuity, much patience, and an allowance of perseverance, of which he always kept a favorite stock on hand, would achieve in the end the object he had in view.

All means, hitherto used, having failed to discover the whereabouts of the fugitives, the doctor proposed that he should perform a pilgrimage in quest of them alone, alleging that he entertained great confidence in the discretionary measures which he should adopt in accordance to circumstances as they arose, and felt a sanguine belief that his efforts would meet with success.

Squire Woodbee assented to the proposal, and Doctor Starkie started on his mission.

It would be tedious to trace the ramifications of the doctor's search, beginning, as it did, with a personal examination of

the night-porter at the Bull Inn, Aldgate. Enough will it be for the purpose to state that his labours in attempting to find the conveyance which took the runaways to Paradise Lodge were at length successful. At break of day, and often before, the Oxford double-first prize-man might be seen flitting like a spectre, "doomed for a certain time to walk" from one hackney-coach stand to another, and putting a series of questions to the early-risen representatives of that now extinct race of hoarse-voiced, broad-brimmed, and heavy-coated dragsmen, who, like pins, are lost, but no one knows to what corner of the earth they possibly can have crept. He was not above even accompanying the early-risen representatives of that now extinct race to the peripatetic coffee-can hard by, and occasionally sipped the cup of reeking purl with a snug coterie of these dependents

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upon the fares of wayfarers, which made him much beloved, exceedingly respected, and particularly popular, at some cost, both to his night's rest and pocket. "The coming man," however, was a long time on the road ; but at length the identical Jehu, who drove Corporal Crump, and those under his immediate protection, to Hampstead Vale, fell into the clutches of Doctor Starkie. He could have embraced him on the spot, if his feelings of triumphant delight had had full scope given to them. As it was, the doctor could not restrain the impulse of generosity for the piece of good fortune, and he forthwith gave his informant sixpence, with the strong desire that he might not spend it all at once.

CHAPTER XX.

NIGHT had closed her curtains, and the busy, teemful world now ceased to toil, although many were not at rest, for while there is life, the curse, that man should labour, and be full of trouble, fulfils its trust.

All, save one, of the inmates of Paradise Lodge were asleep, and she felt as if she should never sleep again. The fear which the mere glance of the figure in the morning created was amply confirmed by the letter the gipsy had given her in so mysterious a manner. Doctor Starkie had

discovered where she was, and at that moment, in the dark depth of the night, demanded to speak with her.

His note ran thus:—

“Fear nothing. My knowledge of your residence is confined to myself, and will remain so, provided you will give me but one interview. Your happiness depends upon your granting this request, for, as you will believe, escape from me is impossible. By twelve o’clock I shall be at your garden gate; further than that I will not ask you to go. We saw each other on the heath to-day—I need not sign my name.”

No, there was no occasion for that. His name was cut deeply in her memory, and it sometimes appeared in her dreams in letters of blood.

What was she to do?

How often had that question risen to her lips, and then, with a shudder, she thought

it might be as well—perhaps better to see him.

“As you will believe, escape from me is impossible.”

By the flickering candle Alice Woodbee read these words, written in hurried characters, over and over again, until they seemed to dance before her eyes. A superstitious dread crept through her veins, and something not unlike that fascination with which the reptile's victim is said to fall helplessly into the fanged jaws of its enemy, she began to feel that it was, indeed, impossible to escape him.

The prayer was brief, but it was an earnest one, that she might meet with mercy and protection in this the hour of her defenceless misery, and the ear to which it was offered was not deaf to the entreaty.

The decision, as the hand of her watch

slowly approached the appointed hour, was made. She would go.

Within a few seconds of the determination, and hurrying every movement as if fearful of delay, Alice, with a light cloak thrown loosely around her, closed the cottage door without a sound, and hurried along the gravel path.

He was there.

"You have come," said he, as she stood within two or three feet of the garden gate, "and have done wisely."

"I am here," was the reply, as the words quivered from her lips; "what have you to say to me to which I can listen?"

"If my heart could speak, much," rejoined he, "but from my tongue, little."

She gave no reply, but he thought that he could hear her heart knock against her bosom.

“You look upon me,” he resumed, “as an enemy?”

“The most dire that ever crossed my path,” returned Alice, in a measured, deliberate tone.

“I know it,” said the Doctor, “and why? Because your beauty made me its slave, and I struggled in vain to break the chains which bound me. If it be a sin to love—”

“Say another man’s wife,” interrupted she, “and add to that, the mother of his child.”

“Granted,” rejoined he, “and therefore the sin, as we are taught to believe. But form and fashion, it would seem, cannot command feeling. They made you another’s, and your plighted troth was to love and honor him who but three bare hours before you never thought of as a husband. Did you love him the more upon quitting the altar with the name of wife?”

She made no answer. She had none to give.

“Am I answered by your silence?” said Doctor Starkie. “By a parity of reasoning then,” continued he, “if no love was engendered in your own breast by taking upon yourself the title of wife, why should it forbid or extinguish the love in mine? As your own heart will tell you, Alice, we are not masters of our affections. However misplaced they may be, however opposed to priestly injunction, and the laws by which society masks itself with skin-deep virtue, we are still the mere puppets of our passions.”

“But—” she hesitated to express another word.

“You would add, perhaps,” resumed he, in a quiet, subdued voice, “that temptation should be resisted. None know that better than myself. To be tempted, and not to fall, is the acme of human perfection.”

“To listen to this discussion,” rejoined Mrs. Woodbee, “is most unbecoming in me. Say what your object is, and let us part.”

“To ask your forgiveness for the past,” replied the wily Oxford double-first prizeman, “and confess the motives by which my conduct has been governed. As there was no love between you and your husband, I did not hate *him*, but your child I could have—” he paused for a moment, and then added in a hissing whisper, as the words came between his clenched teeth, “*murdered!*”

The mother felt as if a blow had been given across her temples, and her limbs appeared ready to sink with her weight.

“Can you forgive me?” inquired he.

“I will pray to be enabled to do so,” was the reply, but it was scarcely audible from emotion.

“None need your prayers more than I,” he rejoined, supplicatingly; “and if any intercede for a penitent, those from your lips will.”

“Are you then contrite?” quickly inquired she.

“If ever man was so,” said he, energetically, “*I* am, and henceforth my life shall be devoted to the proof. I cannot do otherwise than love you, Alice; but beyond this night I will never tell you so again. Without guilt shall your image be garnered in my heart, and I will think of you only as a brother may.”

“This language sounds strange, very strange,” she observed, “after all that has passed.”

“Your precipitate flight prevented your hearing it before,” replied Doctor Starkie.

“Had you not silenced me on that morning

when my pent-up feelings broke their bounds, and left me in indignation, but partly understood, there would have been no necessity for the ill-judged step of quitting your home. I should have told you then, as now, that the bitterness of the struggle was over, and unlike repentance generally, with me it came *not* too late."

"Will you really then befriend me?" said Mrs. Woodbee.

"Ay, all that is within my power," rejoined he, "and the services which I can render will constitute my only earthly pleasure. Let the past be," he continued, "as if it had never been. By the future only judge me, and you shall find how love may be vanquished by principle."

"How can I trust the sincerity of your promise?" inquired she.

"Test it as you will," was the reply.

For a moment she reflected.

“What, then, is your advice in this my forlorn and hapless state?”

“Return to your home,” responded he—
“without delay.”

“But how can I meet my husband’s desires
pleasure?”

“Were it not for his fierce and ungovernable temper,” responded the Doctor,
“which at all times can be held in check
by me, I should say let as little preparation
be made for your return as your departure.
But impulse of rage, such as his, cannot be
trusted. I will undertake, within a day,
that your reception shall be all that could
be desired, and that not one word of re-
proach shall escape his tongue.”

“But what will be the conduct pursued
in future towards my son?” asked Alice.
“He is now just recovering from—”

“As that depends upon me,” interrupted
Doctor Starkie, as if the subject required to

be turned quickly to advantage, "be satisfied that nothing shall occur to interrupt the even tenor of his happiness. I owe him much, more than can be repaid; but as far as possible atonement shall be made."

"And if this advice be rejected?"

"Then command me in any way you will," replied he. "The best in my power to give I have given."

"Would you consider it your duty to enforce, by indirect means, my adopting this course?" inquired Mrs. Woodbee.

"Not for my soul's salvation," was the answer.

"You speak like one who honorably means to abide by what he says," remarked Alice; "but I cannot decide in haste."

"Neither is there any occasion for your doing so," said he. "Think well of what has passed between us, and let your judgment be directed by cool reflection."

“To-morrow, at this time, I shall be prepared with my answer,” rejoined Mrs. Woodbee. “Will you be here to receive it?”

“To the moment,” returned he.

“Farewell!”

Her last word was echoed by the Oxford double-first prize-man, and as he turned upon his heel to leave the barricaded gate of Paradise Lodge, a loud, triumphant chuckle burst from his lips in spite of his utmost efforts to suppress it.

The air “hath currents as the water hath,” and there are other winds that blow than those we sail before.

END OF VOL. II.

THE
BELLE OF THE VILLAGE.

BY
JOHN MILLS,
AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN," "OUR
COUNTY," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE BELLE OF THE VILLAGE.

CHAPTER I.

A FURTHER liberty will be taken with the pleasant little apothecary of Grundy's Green, and his stiff partner, Mrs. Doctor Grimes, by again drawing the notice of the public to them when within the conjugal sheets of the domestic "four-poster."

Mrs. Doctor Grimes was in bed, but as for sleeping, she entertained not the most distant inclination, and what more immediately concerned her spouse, her propension

of mind, if anything, was rather more in the perspective, that he should also be denied the soothing syrup of the drowsy god.

The apothecary, as usual, had made a long round of professional visits that day, and was weary with tinkering, puttying, and plastering the damaged systems of his multifarious patients; but he knew—perhaps by instinct, perhaps by the sharp cricket-like “ahem” of his stiff partner—that gentle sleep was as far from weighing his eyelids down as if the night bell had summoned him to lose as little time as possible in putting on his breeches.

For a short time, by way of a relish to the pleasure in pickle, Mrs. Doctor Grimes assumed the appearance of settling down and composing herself; but it was only one of those deceptive lulls which precede the storm.

"Ahem!" again made the apothecary's ears prick forward with their usual involuntary action.

The battery was on the point of opening, and a deeply-drawn sigh from the precincts of his breast signalized the fact.

"Are you going to sleep may I presume to ask, Sir?" said the stiff partner by his side, in a tone conveying that the pleasant little apothecary had committed, or was on the point of committing, an injury of the deepest kind.

"Not if my own dear chuck wishes a little bit of titty-wee, cozy-pozy chat," replied he, trying the conciliatory, but with a forlorn hope of success.

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Mr. Grimes," sharply retorted his stiff partner. "Spare me that infliction at least."

The apothecary groaned inwardly in the spirit. The light business fell like a dab of

wet clay, and his resource appeared to rest only on the heavy line.

“Margaret,” said he, impressively, “why should I have to remind you of my professional reputation? Is not our bread dependent—”

“Oh yes!” interrupted she, “and our butter too. But I’ll thank you, Sir,” continued she, “not to address me in that disrespectful manner. I am perfectly conscious of the responsibility of what I say, and I’ll not be supposed wanting in that knowledge by any impertinent interference on your part. Things must have reached a pretty pass, I think, when a hop-o’-my-thumb like you can take upon yourself the majesty—if I may so express myself—of calling your wife to order. Upon my word it’s enough to make the bed clothes rise from off one!”

“Far be it from my wish, Margaret,” re-

joined the apothecary, "to be instrumental in any way, in maintaining a domestic difference—otherwise broil. I'll hold my tongue."

"In-*deed*!" exclaimed Mrs. Doctor Grimes. "Ho, you'll hold your tongue, will you, Sir? Then I'm not to be answered, I suppose. What a nice, polite man you are for a professional! What an ornament for a chimney-piece!"

"I am quite sure," returned he in a deep base, melodramatic tone, "I am quite sure, Margaret, you're going to greater lengths than intended."

"Permit *me*, Sir, to be the judge of my own lengths," added the sharer of his bed and board. "I'm not going to allow *you*, or anybody else, to measure *my* lengths."

"If this course is to be pursued," said the little humble apothecary, "if you will persist in this unnecessary and unhappy

difference, Margaret, may I ask what have I done?"

"You are always asking what you've done," replied Mrs. Doctor Grimes, "and if not nauseated with the question, it's because Nature has been bountiful in giving me an unusually strong stomach. Put any question but that, and it's possible we may come to terms."

There was a ray of hope.

"What then is your wish?" meekly asked the apothecary. "Tell me, Margaret," continued he, "and it shall be gratified."

"I've not a doubt of that," rejoined she, "not the least. There's no occasion to give yourself the trouble of making such assurances, Sir, for the future. The care which I intend to observe of having my wishes gratified, is on so comprehensive a scale, that assistance would be superfluous."

The apothecary was in a complete fix.

Turn which way he would, he was met at all points as if hemmed in by a *chevaux-de-frise*.

“Convey to me, then,” said he, “what your desires are, Margaret. They shall be unconditionally and unreservedly obeyed.”

“Ahem !”

Mrs. Doctor Grimes—like that isolated character spoken of in the remote ages, as the woman who loved to have her own way, but supposed to be as fabulous as the Griffin, Unicorn, and Sphinx—felt that her authority was approaching the absolute, and found herself endowed with new vitality upon the discovery of the power.

“As it would appear,” remarked she slowly, “that you begin to entertain a sense of what is due to me, Sir, I desire a faithful, true, and particular account of what your ears—provided they are long enough, and of which I should venture to say there

could be no doubt—of what your ears,” repeated she, “may have gathered in the shape of news, intelligence, or information, during your visitations of to-day, with a view of drawing my own inferences. You will understand—at least you will endeavour to do so—that I require no opinion or impression which the incidents may have caused in your own mind—admitting for argument’s sake that you possess a mind—but merely a simple narrative of the facts as they occurred. You understand me?”

“Perfectly, Margaret,” replied the apothecary; but he trembled for the performance of a task which he neither knew how to commence or finish.

“Very good,” rejoined Mrs. Doctor Grimes, “in that case I’m satisfied. Begin, Sir.”

It is easy enough to order the beginning of a story, but in case of there being none

to tell, the imposed duty is far from being an easy one.

The apothecary coughed both long and loud, but he could get no further.

“When you have quite recovered from that cough, let me know as early as convenient,” remarked Mrs. Doctor Grimes, in her severest tone.

The keenness of the edge, perhaps, took the apothecary’s breath away, for he said nothing in justification or excuse for his ill-timed cough.

“My dear Margaret,” at length gasped he, as his situation grew momentarily more desperate, “it will be more satisfactory that you should learn what you desire through the medium of questions. Whatever you ask shall be answered.”

“They may, certainly, lead more to the point,” observed Mrs. Doctor Grimes. “Well then, by way of commencement, what

passed between you and that pot companion of yours, Mr. Giles, this morning? I heard that he sent for you."

"His poor lodger, Mrs. Somerset, was taken worse," replied the meekest of apothecaries.

"Ha, poor lodger indeed!" ejaculated she, with a sneer. "Who she is, or what she is, or where she came from, nobody seems to know. I wonder, for my part, that she's not ashamed of herself in living under an unmarried man's roof all this time."

"She's a poor broken-down lady, Margaret," replied her husband, compassionately.

"I don't dispute that, Sir, do I?" quickly rejoined his stiff partner. "But broken down or not, there's a modest prudence to be observed, I suppose, in every female not totally lost to the dignity belonging to her

~~sex~~. However, we will pass that over and proceed. You say you found her worse?"

"Much worse," returned he.

"And taking the opportunity by the forelock, if I may so express myself," added Mrs. Doctor Grimes, "urged the necessity of confiding to you the particulars of her history, and so learned all about the mysterious lodgers at the general shop, eh?"

"She was too ill to speak, Margaret."

"In that case," resumed Mrs. Doctor Grimes, "we'll proceed to another subject without loss of time. You paid of course your three - an' - sixpenny visit to the Oaks?"

"I did," said the apothecary, and his brow crimsoned beneath his nightcap at the thought that three and sixpence was so easily earned.

“Did you gain any intelligence concerning matters in that quarter?”

“Oh yes!” exclaimed the apothecary, as if a circumstance had suddenly flitted in his memory, “I certainly—I most certainly did. You’ll be glad to hear some news, Margaret, I know you will.”

“You can keep these ebullitions to yourself, Sir,” gravely responded Mrs. Doctor Grimes. “And although I shall listen to what you have to communicate with some interest, yet I should have greater reason to be satisfied had the statement been a voluntary one. The necessity of pumping one’s husband ought not to exist. But go on, Sir, go on.”

The poor apothecary’s hopes of softening down the crudity of his stiff partner’s humour, were now abandoned to the winds. As the promise of news failed to rub off the knotty, rusty, and hacked edge of her spleen,

nothing would. The experience of the past taught him that.

“The Squire,” said he, like an automaton, and Mrs. Doctor Grimes listened attentively, “told me that he expected the tutor back to-morrow, and hoped my engagements were such as to admit of my dining with them at the hour of six.”

“The tutor back to-morrow, eh?” repeated she, as if each word merited careful weighing. “Did he say anything else?”

“Nothing in particular, Margaret,” replied the apothecary.

“Permit me, Sir, to judge whether the communication may be considered particular or not,” rejoined Mrs. Doctor Grimes. “Confine yourself to the simple facts.”

“He merely requested me to feel his pulse, and look at his tongue, Margaret,” returned the apothecary; “a not unusual method which we adopt with patients of

both high and low degree, and the examination led to the discovery of a slight tendency to an attack of laryngismus stridulus—"

"Oh bother that!" ejaculated his wife partner. "Did he make any further family revelations?"

"No, Margaret," responded the apothecary, "he did not."

"Then go to sleep," said Mrs. Doctor Grimes, and with this order she gave her spouse the broad of her back, and left him with a very shabby share of the blankets.

CHAPTER II.

THE linnets and the larks sang as gaily
ever in Paradise Lodge, but if there was
a sad heart among the feathered family,
heavy one might have been discovered
neath its roof, notwithstanding the sun-
ne without, and the music within.

The old Peninsular was not given to the
flood of tears; but one, at least, might
have been seen stealing slowly down his
furrowed cheek, and, diverging from the
direct channel, arrived by a circuitous route
at the terminus of his nose, from which he

roughly brushed it with the end of his hook.

"Taking the year through," said he in a mild kind of whistle, "I don't cry a great deal. It may be a matter of forty year ago, or more, since I snivelled, but to be left alone again doesn't seem to suit me."

"Your friend, the corporal, must come and see you occasionally when we are gone," remarked Mrs. Woodbee, "and opportunities will occur, I hope, of our meeting again."

"Ah!" sighed the veteran, shaking his head, "there's no knowing when folks part in this world that they'll ever meet again. I've been at many a mess where those who dined together at noon didn't live to meet at supper; and this is not exactly confined to us soldiers. But it's no use a-grumbling," continued he, with a wave of the hook. "What is must be, and what must be's the best!"

“It would give me much regret,” said Leonard, taking the old Peninsular by his solitary hand, “if I thought that I should ever see you again. Your kindness has made me feel strong and well, and that I had not been for years—three long years.”

“And if you don’t remain so, young gentleman,” replied Bill Stumpit, “or should they break their promise of treating ye like a Christian—and not a particularly tough one”—added he, “you know where to march, sir. Paradise Lodge is the name o’ the quarters, and once inside ’em, nothing short of artillery should force a breach.”

“I shall always remember Paradise Lodge,” rejoined Leonard, “as a refuge where a kind friend has a hearty welcome to receive me with.”

“That’s it, young gentleman,” returned the old Peninsular; “that’s the English of the text as sure as my father’s great grand-

father's name was Stumpit. And if they think—I don't say who, but anybody—they could carry the defences, let 'em be told that I was at the siege of Cadiz, and consequently know something of fortifications. That's all," continued he, as if he had clenched the argument with a rivet. "Let 'em be told that I was at the siege of Cadiz," and the hook flourished in concord with the bit of British oak, as if the reminiscence stirred his martial spirit, and fired his blood.

"From the assurances, however, which we have received," observed Mrs. Woodbee, "I entertain but little dread of our meeting with all the consideration promised, and, therefore, believe that the fortifications," continued she, smiling, "will not be necessary."

"I hope so," said the veteran; "although if my feelings were to be thought of only, we should set about 'em at once, and make Paradise Lodge a citadel; for

there's something runs in my mind, that when folks have been particularly cruel, they don't know how to become the reverse in a hurry. But, as I said before, what is must be, and what must be's the best."

"But we are all liable to err," replied Mrs. Woodbee, "and if amendment be promised, it can only be carried into effect by the opportunity being given."

"That's true," rejoined the old Peninsular, "and there's no getting over truth. She'll show her face at last, although a plaguy long while about it sometimes. But there's one thing puzzles my brain sorely, and I can't get the better of it."

"What's that?" inquired Leonard.

The bit of British oak was raised, and then down it went upon the floor with forcible action.

"Dicky Crump," replied its proprietor, "brought ye here, placed ye under my par-

ticular care, told me to let no harm come, or overtake ye, and be on guard both night and day. Now, although a non-commissioned officer, he's my superior you'll recollect, and may bring me to a kind of private court martial for disobeying orders."

"In what way have you failed to observe the duties imposed upon you?" asked Mrs. Woodbee.

"I don't think it can be said that I *have* disobeyed 'em," rejoined the old Peninsular, "but what I'm going to do is a different matter."

"How so?" returned Leonard.

"Why ain't I going to surrender ye into the very hands of the *enemy*?" said Bill Stumpit. "Don't you beat a retreat, as it were, right upon his bayonets, trusting to his humanity to give quarter and ground arms?"

"My mother thinks—"

“Ay, young gentleman,” interrupted the veteran with an emphatic flourish of the bit of British oak, “but what will Dicky Crump say? A man of my acquaintance was flogged once for thinking right when his orders were wrong; but he caught it on the grounds that he had no business to think at all.”

“Our good friend the corporal,” said Mrs. Woodbee, “is too polite to oppose our plans, of which, by this time, he is acquainted.”

“To be sure, that’s correct enough,” replied the old Peninsular, “and in a land of liberty like this, people, to get anything in the shape of a return for the money it cost to make it one, ought to be allowed to do as they please. But a trust is a trust, and I’m far from certain that I’m not about committing a breach in mine.”

“You shall be held harmless for giving up possession of us,” rejoined Mrs. Wood-

bee, "and receive the united thanks of the corporal, with our own, for the undeviating care you have taken of your charge."

"Well, Ma'am!" responded Bill Stumpit, "I must run the risk, I suppose, of being broke; but I should like to have had ye longer with me. I've got used to company, d'ye see, and what I'm to do alone, for the time to come, I don't know."

"Perhaps we shall hear of a Mrs. Stumpit," remarked Leonard, looking archly at his mother.

"A Mrs. what, Sir?" said the old Peninsular. "No, no, young gentleman," continued he; "Bill Stumpit, or what is left of him, isn't going into drill again, take his word for it."

At this juncture a post chaise and pair, for the first time since it swung upon its hinges, drew up at the gate of Paradise Lodge, and from the interior glided—for

there was no appearance of the ordinary gait known as a walk—Doctor Starkie the Oxford double-first prize-man.

Leonard was prepared to see him—quite prepared—but the sight of the parenthesis, as the doctor came smiling up the gravel path, sent the blood back into his heart, and the tinge of ruddy health upon his cheek faded into the paleness of the lily. Old scenes rushed in a torrent upon his memory, and there was not one but he would willingly have buried in oblivion.

Doctor Starkie expressed himself as being in a most felicitous state at meeting with his dear young friend again, and shook Leonard with both hands, and held him off so as to be able to examine him minutely from head to heel, and conveyed a decided opinion that he had grown much handsomer, and more like his mother than ever.

Nothing and no one escaped Doctor

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Starkie, and such was his excellent humour with the world in general, that he praised and lauded all that his eyes fell upon.

Paradise Lodge was an elysium in itself, and the old Peninsular a living monument of heroic deeds. The mechanical arrangement of the hook did not escape his admiration, and he thought the bit of British oak a perfect model. The birds, too, were worthy of the attention of the most enthusiastic of ornithologists, and he should take an early opportunity of mentioning them to a few of the learned societies, with the view of their becoming liberal purchasers.

Time, however, pressed, and if he might suggest that, provided the luggage was ready—it could have been held in his hat, and that he knew—it would be better, perhaps, to commence the journey without further delay; and the parenthesis came out

remarkably strong as he concluded the proposition.

No objection was offered to this, and in silence the old Peninsular watched the concluding preparations for their departure. Many kind words were spoken in acknowledgment of his hospitality and kindness; but Bill Stumpit appeared too much moved to speak, and stood staring with his Cyclops' eye in silence,

A few more brief units of the hour, and the old Peninsular was straining his optic in watching a yellow post-chaise being whirled away in the distance. A cloud of dust arose, and was blown high into the air as the rapid wheels increased in velocity, and as long as he could see even this, he still continued his riveted and earnest gaze. At length there was nothing, not even a sound, to mark the course it took, and then he turned upon his bit of British oak, and brushed away a tear.

CHAPTER III.

CORPORAL CRUMP was not one of those easily excited and nervous individuals to be put greatly out of his way—in the diction of household words—by a mere trifle; but had a shell ploughed its way through the general shop into the little back settlement, and burst then and there, he could scarcely have evinced greater astonishment or consternation than he displayed at the contents of the letter which he then held in his hand.

Short—of necessity—and quick was the corporal's march as he continued to peruse,

in a muttered tone, the astounding document; and, from the laborious pains which he bestowed upon the work, it appeared that he intended to make himself complete master of each word and syllable down, perhaps, to the crossing of the T's, and dotting of the I's.

The longest as well as the most fleeting of tasks pertaining to humanity, must have an end, unless, indeed, a Chancery suit may be considered in the light of an exception, and, at length, the corporal, perfect to the nicest particular, carefully folded the letter in its pristine creases, and threw it on the table before him.

“If wonders should ever come to an end,” soliloquised he, “it will be when the world does.”

At the conclusion of this sage remark he resumed his march up and down the back settlement, blowing, rather than whistling, the popular air of “The girls we left behind us.”

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Jacob Giles, who was occu-
customer in the shop, he
floor of the back settlement,
length view of his upright,
figure.

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consider yourself accountable
?" inquired the little general

This vent, however, did not seem sufficient for the escape of the excitement, which had risen to a pressure of something like a hundred and twenty to the square inch, and he therefore resolved to try what the powers and parts of speech would accomplish.

“ Women are rum-uns !” ejaculated Corporal Crump. “ There’s no getting over or under, through or out of that fact. I haven’t had a great deal to do with the feminine sex throughout my life, but experience tells me that women are rum-uns ! There’s no calculating, with anything like certainty, what they’ll do or what they won’t do. To-day they think one thing, to-morrow another. It’s all white at one time, and all black sooner afterwards than anybody would suppose the change could be made in. In case they say they will, you’d think they would, by the way in which they express themselves ; but the odds are even

that round comes their weather vane in a jiffy from south by west to north by east. Somebody said, if my memory doesn't deceive me, that if they will, they *will*, depend on't; but if they won't, they *won't*, and there's an end on't, and, in my opinion, that chap spoke exactly the truth of the matter. Oh dear me," sighed the Corporal, "women *are* rum-uns!" and to the great amazement of Jacob Giles, who was occupied in serving a customer in the shop, he flung open the door of the back settlement, and gave a full-length view of his upright, stiff, and wiry figure.

Jacob felt amazed, and expressed the feeling in his looks. Was the care which had been taken to preserve the secret inviolable thus to be cast aside, and recklessly sent to sport with fortune?

"Do you consider yourself accountable for your acts?" inquired the little general

general shopkeeper, raising his hands. "Tell me all about it. What's the matter?—Do speak."

"Powder, tow, tinder, and brimstone!" exclaimed the old soldier with unusual irritability. "Arn't I letting fly the words, comrade, as hard as I can let 'em drive? Don't I tell ye that the entire stock of crockery's gone to everlasting smash?"

Jacob Giles rubbed his nose, and replied "Certainly."

"Very good then!" rejoined the Corporal, "that's what I mean. But if you're not satisfied with an outline of the manœuvres which have stole a march upon us, there are the particulars," continued he, handing the letter to Jacob, which had caused so much perturbation in his mind.

"Why, where did this come from?" inquired the little general shopkeeper, examining the superscription.

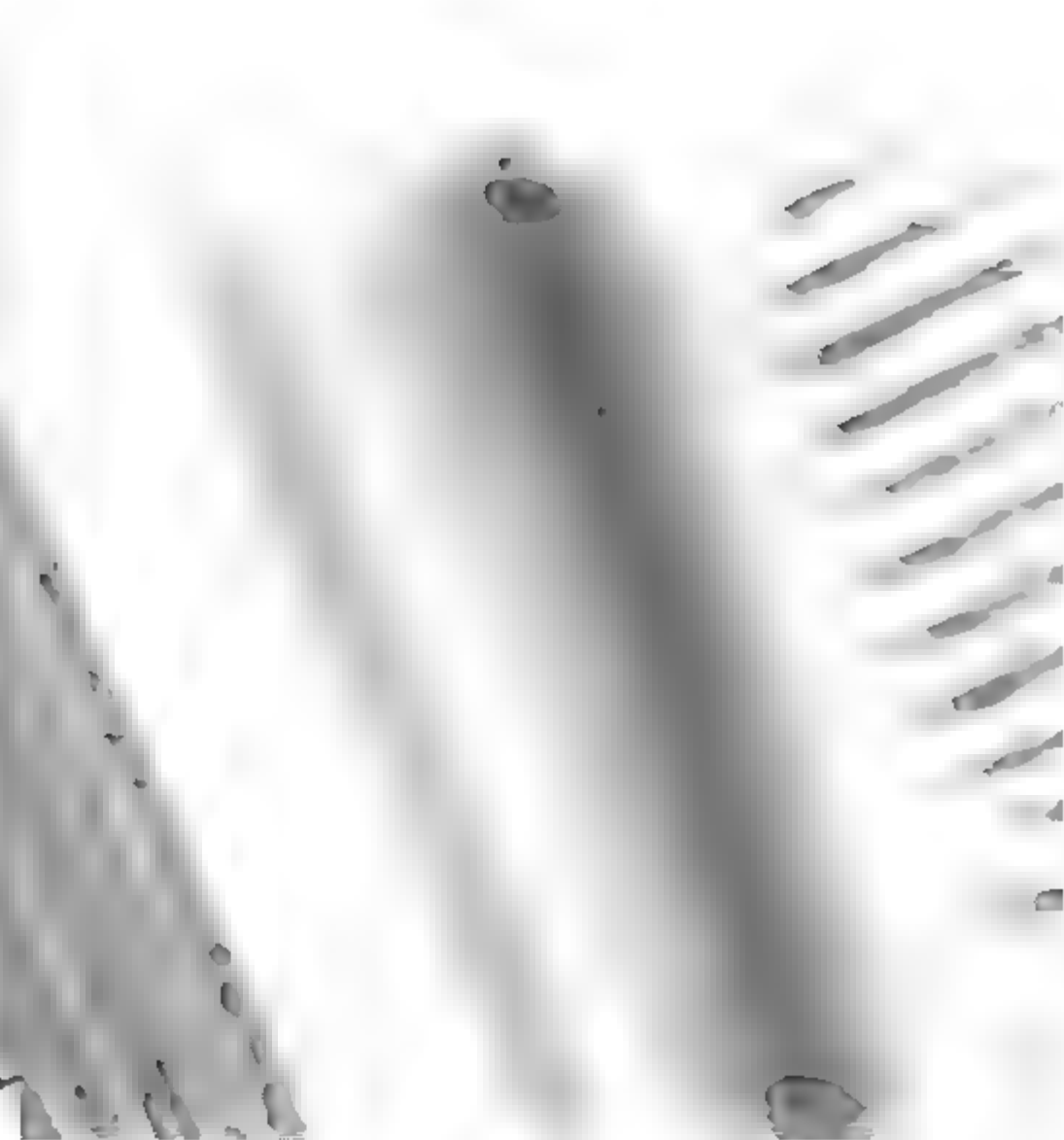
“Miss Clara sent Bridget with it not three minutes since,” responded the Corporal.

“Perils of the deep!” again exclaimed Jacob Giles, at the end of the first paragraph of the epistle. “Persuaded of the necessity of returning home and confident of the——.”

“There, there!” interrupted Corporal Crump, “keep the pleasure of reading it all to yourself, comrade. I know every word, and would repeat them backwards for a small wager. Birds are said to be caught easily if you can put a pinch of salt on their tails, and darn my old coat if it doesn’t seem too true to be denied.”

“And will arrive this very day,” muttered Jacob, as he devoured the information with an avidity which can scarcely be described.

“Without so much as giving an hour’s notice of the movement,” remarked Corporal Crump, with more ill-humour than he had ever yet displayed upon any subject, “and



act of others, "that being discovered, let see what Mrs. Woodbee was to do, wiser than to return home. If the dear lady hadn't come by her own will, they might have dragged her."

"Not if I'd been by her elbow," objected the Corporal, sternly. "They wouldn't have dragged her, comrade, if I'd been within a musket's length."

"But you were not," argued Jacob, "that makes a wide difference. They fell upon her, doubtlessly, like a hawk upon a fledgling, and she yielded perhaps, friend, from a cause which often makes a stronger heart than hers quail in the battle of necessity."

"Well, well!" said Corporal Crump, as partly, at least, coincided in this opinion. "I may have been somewhat too hasty in my judgment; but it does seem that one's care and trouble should be

taking us all by surprise; it's what I call mutinous. What was the use, I should like to be informed, of my slipping about this neighbourhood like a thief in the dark, and wearing a hat," continued he, pointing to the brigandish-looking beaver, occupying a remote corner of the back settlement, "more to cover my face than my head, when directly my back was turned, or soon afterwards, all one's care is set at nought, and straight into mischief they go, like moths into a candle?"

"But I don't see," observed Jacob; "but I don't see—"

"Nor I either," interrupted the Corporal, impatiently. "It's impossible that any one should through such a haze of circumstances."

"But I was going to add," resumed the little general shopkeeper, for it was part of his kindly nature to find excuses for the

conduct of others, "that being discovered, I don't see what Mrs. Woodbee was to do, otherwise than to return home. If the poor dear lady hadn't come by her own free will, they might have dragged her."

"Not if I'd been by her elbow," observed the Corporal, sternly. "They wouldn't have dragged her, comrade, if I'd been within a musket's length."

"But you were not," argued Jacob, "and that makes a wide difference. They pounced upon her, doubtlessly, like a hawk upon a fledgling, and she yielded perhaps, my friend, from a cause which often makes a stouter heart than hers quail in the battle of life—necessity."

"Well, well!" said Corporal Crump, as if he partly, at least, coincided in this opinion. "I may have been somewhat too hasty in my judgment; but it does seem hard that one's care and trouble should be

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turned over, when least expected, like a pail of suds."

"Time reveals most things," replied the little general shopkeeper, "and I think, with patience, that we shall find Mrs. Woodbee has acted neither hastily nor unwisely."

Corporal Crump administered upon his own breast a sonorous thwack, with the intent, it appeared, of correcting some feelings within, and gave a succession of quick double-knocks between Jacob's shoulders, in unlimited approval of the sentiments which he had expressed.

"Two heads are said to be better than one," remarked the old soldier, "and I know that two hearts are."

There was a slight bustle in the shop at this moment, a sound which might have been conjectured as the effect of leaves agitated by the dying wind at eventide.

It proved however, to be the rapidly revolving skirts of Doctor—in the absence of his stiff partner his title will be renewed—Grimes's coat, as that pounder of drugs came with a whirl among piles of Cheshire cheeses, bales of calico, barrels of the real Dorset, and other miscellaneous articles comprising the stock of the general shop.

“Is anybody here? is nobody here?” quickly asked the apothecary, turning round as if set on an easy-going pivot.

“Oh yes, Doctor, here we are,” replied Jacob, making his appearance from the murky depths of the back settlement.

“Come,” rejoined the doctor, panting like a coursed hare, “that's right! wouldn't have missed ye for a shilling. Just come from the Oaks? Have ye heard what's happened?”

Jacob was about replying in the affirma-

tive; but the corporal checked him with a hidden dig in the ribs from behind.

“Ye—no,” returned he, “that is to say, not exactly, perhaps.”

“Hoped I should be the first to tell ye,” rejoined the breathless apothecary, “Like to carry the freshest news at all times. Who do you think is to be at—”

“If that’s all,” broke in the Corporal, suddenly appearing above Jacob’s head like a poplar above a pollard, “we’ll not trouble you, Doctor. The intelligence, Sir, so to speak, is crusted.”

“What, are *you* back again?” ejaculated the apothecary, with as much amazement as if an apparition of one of his late lamented patients stood before him.

“If I’m not,” rejoined Corporal Crump, “the counterfeit’s so good, that it’ll pass, I know.”

“What news for Margaret!” exclaimed Doctor Grimes, exultingly; and making a firm pull to get his hat well over his eyes, away he went at a pace which made the tails of his coat stand out like buckram.

CHAPTER IV.

DARK, heavy tapestry fell around a deep bay window, through the lattice-worked panes of which the moon beams stole, throwing a varied light upon the walls of the apartment and streaking long, gaunt shadows upon the floor. In the distance they danced glitteringly in bars of liquid silver as the night wind swept in ripples the bosom of the lake, and darting through the dew drops, studding the greensward, myriads of stars flashed as brightly on earth, as those then glistening in the realms above.

In the recess, and commanding a full view of the brilliant moon-lit scene, sat Alice Woodbee, and a second chair, within a few feet of hers was occupied by the proud proprietor of the Oaks, and the manors thereunto belonging.

For an hour they had been left alone, and for an hour not a sentence or word had dropped from either of their lips. The silence was most awkward—a pause of the most unpleasant kind; but neither seemed disposed to break it.

Scrupulously particular with his promise, as he would have been in meeting his acceptance, Tobias Woodbee received his wife and son as if they had been from home, for a time, with his full leave and concurrence. He shook both by their hands, and even, after a moment's hesitation, went to the unexpected length of saluting his wife's cheek. There was a formality in the action which

conveyed a feeling not deeper than the skin; but it had the effect of rendering the reception much less embarrassing. Regarding Leonard, he was agreeably surprised to witness such an alteration for the better in his health, and said so with a frankness expressive, one might think, of the honesty of the assertion. He had smiles for both, and no shades of a frown for either, and a stranger would have reasonably supposed that Tobias Woodbee was a pattern of a husband, and the finest sample of a father capable of production, let the search for the jewel be never so wide.

The dinner—that to which the apothecary had been invited—passed off remarkably well, and nothing could exceed the apparent delight of Doctor Starkie, as the good humour of his patron became more strongly developed as the evening advanced. Quietly, and in a way beyond being de-

scribed with anything like accurateness, the Oxford double-first prize-man applauded everything done and said to the echo, and the parenthesis looked fixed as he often glanced in triumph towards Alice with eyes which spoke as clearly as eyes were ever known to speak:—" 'Tis I who have done this, remember, *I* who can do and undo."

Hours passed swiftly and smoothly as were ever turned from the sycle of Time, and the pleasant little apothecary of Grundy's Green quitted the Oaks with the firm conviction that a more united family he had not eaten a nicer selected, better-chosen dinner, withal, since he walked the hospitals. Whatever differences might have existed, they were now healed, and he resolved to promulgate this intelligence to the entire neighbourhood between the next rising of the sun and setting of that luminary.

Upon the apothecary's departure, Doctor

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Starkie observed that he desired a private conference with his inestimable young pupil, and, somewhat to Leonard's dismay, he looped an arm within one of his, and took him out of the room, with a force slightly blended with persuasion.

For an hour they had been left alone, and for an hour not a word or sentence had dropped from either of their lips. One had much to say, however, and she felt that the present was too precious to be lost. Faltering words rose to die inaudibly upon her tongue. She knew not how to begin, and yet her heart told her that each moment but added to the danger of delay.

Oh, that he would say something! She could bear reproaches, coarse as even he could speak them, better than this terrible silence. His affected welcome and kindness she saw was mere shallow acting—a ray of pale, watery sunshine, which sometimes

precedes the gloom—and that the outside varnish scarcely screened the gaping clefts beneath. He had made a promise, however, and Tobias Woodbee entertained too high notions of respectability, and what was due to his character, to forfeit a word of it. The immediate successor of the great man on 'Change possessed lofty notions of promises, and every button would have flown off the white waistcoat at the ghost of a suspicion being circulated that he had not kept the strictest faith in every engagement of his life, whether coming under the head of commercial, political, or social.

There he sat with a hand placed beneath the treasured garment, and across his breast, while the other drummed an imaginary tune upon an arm of the chair, for no sound came from it. As far as the uncertain light permitted the picture to be brought out with correctness, the portrait of Tobias

Woodbee appeared proud, triumphant, and satisfied.

"Can you—will you listen to me?" at length fell in a low, plaintive voice upon his ear.

The respectable head of the proprietor of the Oaks bent slowly forwards, and regaining its perpendicular in the same measured form, an affirmative might be supposed to have been thus signalised.

"I need not ask," said Alice, in the same tone, "whether my conduct, in quitting your roof, deeply offended you—that I know. But," continued she, "that step would never have been taken, had I then had what I now hope to possess."

"May I inquire what that is, Madam?" returned her husband, with infinite politeness, if with little warmth.

"A patient hearing," replied Alice, calmly. For the third time the respectable

head signified that a silent assent was given.

And the quick words—words uttered in a soft, apprehensive whisper—were poured into his ears, and the listener edged his chair nearer and nearer to her who spoke them. He no longer drummed an imaginary air, neither was a hand thrust among the dainty plaits beneath the white waistcoat ; but, leaning forward, he clutched the arms of the seat, and breathed like one whose breath was hard to get.

The moonbeams streamed through the lattice-worked panes of the bay window brighter and brighter yet, and the long, gaunt shadows on the walls began to dwindle into pigmies ; but still he listened.

“To be deceived ; for *him* to be a popinjay !”

Beads of cold sweat oozed from his brow.

“A cuckold !”

An oath, deep and blasting burst from his tongue.

“He would —;” but his utterance was choked.

“Stay!” exclaimed the soft, trembling voice, “and hear me to the end. As husband and wife—in the holy meaning of those words—we have never been, perhaps never can be; but an Allseeing Eye knows that I never deceived you in thought, word, or deed. What I have now told you, and what yet remains for you to learn, was far from my wish to withhold even for a moment, had I dared to make the communication. It was not, however, from any fear of consequences to myself or your honor —”

“Damnation!” muttered he, wringing his hands convulsively together.

“It was not from any fear of these,” resumed Alice, “that I became a fugitive and wanderer, but the dread of —”

“Tell me no more,” interrupted the wretched man, in a strange, unearthly tone. “I see all, all,” continued he. “I was the fool and you the—ha, ha, ha!” and the wild laugh jarred upon the ear like a shriek of misery. “My boy, too! To make him a victim, and me a devil!”

“Suppress these feelings,” returned she. “I have still more to say.”

“Unless you’d drive me mad,” added he, jumping upon his feet, “speak not another word. There’s a fire here,” continued he, thumping his breast, “which can only be quenched by death. I’ll murder —”

With that word his lips closed, and his head drooping gradually on one side, he dropped upon the floor as if a bullet had passed through his brain.

A scream, loud and long, echoed through the house from room to room, startling many a drowsy bat in the oaken wainscots.

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Within a few brief seconds Doctor Starkie bore away the inanimate form of Alice in his arms, and ashy as were her lips he would then, dead as she looked, have smothered them with burning kisses, had not her weeping child been near to guard her from his sensual touch.

CHAPTER V.

“If these days be so particularly enlightened,” remarked Corporal Crump. occupying that coziest of cozy seats, the old arm chair, in the bar-parlour of the Harrow and Pitchfork, “if these days be so particularly enlightened,” repeated he, “as some people say, it’s my opinion Folly must hold the candle.”

Mistress Twigg felt almost sorry that somebody, besides herself, was not present to benefit by so erudite a remark, and yet that buxom relict of the departed unknown

would have admitted, had the secrets of her heart been revealed, that to be alone with the corporal was a treat of no common order.

“I don’t know how it is or why it is,” continued he, musingly; “but there seems to be a kind of rabid movement now-a-days, to improve everybody and everything, although, as far as I have yet seen, folks neither live longer nor die easier.”

Mistress Twigg observed, that as far as her practical knowledge extended, she felt justified in entertaining an opinion so perfectly similar, that it might properly be compared to a twin currant on the same stalk.

“I am not one of those either,” said the Corporal, “who think there’s nothing like the good old days of Adam and Eve.”

The widow blushed like the roseate morn, for a slight sketchy outline of the primitive

costume of that early period in the world's history, at that moment presented itself to her mental vision.

"It's by no means uncommon," continued Corporal Crump, "to find people giving praise to nothing but what's old, barring always a woman, who, if her word is to be taken, never grows ancient; but if I'm any judge, the scales of the past and the present are pretty evenly balanced. The pull is not great on either side."

The hostess expressed herself satisfied of the statement being grafted upon unquestionable and veritable fact.

"Do what we may," resumed the Corporal, "say what we please, dance, limp, sing, or weep; the beginning of life will remain the same as it has been, and so will its end."

The widow's capacious bosom heaved a corresponding sigh, and with a shake of the

head she added, that "it was very true, remarkably so."

"Speaking of life," continued the old soldier, who appeared inclined to retain the thread of the discussion, "I often think what histories the newspapers contain under the head of births, deaths, and marriages."

Mistress Twigg looked intently upon the pointed toe of her buckled slipper, but made no rejoinder. She began to feel a flutter within, caused by these words, of no ordinary kind.

"Ah!" ejaculated Corporal Crump, referring to the white-washed ceiling directly above his head, as if a few notes might be referred to from that quarter, "there's a great deal in those few words, Charlotte, births, deaths, and marriages."

It was very strange that he should thus dwell upon them, at least so thought the relict of the departed Twigg, and her

slipper began to beat time to the whirligig of thoughts in her brain, and the crimson ribands rustled in a way which fully indicated the condition of the feelings of the wearer.

Perchance, and flattering hope prompted the pleasing thought, Corporal Crump was arriving at a state of focus.

“Our acquaintance, Charlotte,” said the old soldier, and his voice sounded to the widow’s ear as soft, and far more musical than a well-played flute or shepherd’s pipe, “our acquaintance, Charlotte,” repeated he, “is not of yesterday’s date. We have known each other long enough to understand each other, I believe, and if I’ve not spoken plainly out—”

It was coming then; the question—*that* question which she had once heard before, was on the air-trigger of being popped again. No wonder that the bar-parlour,

lemons, and teaspoons started off in a waltz. The punch-bowl threw a somerset, and the corporal stood on his head.

It—that is to say, whatever it was—passed. All was still, save those gushing emotions which rise from loving hearts, like sparkles of light from wine.

The corporal, lemons, teaspoons, and punch-bowl, resumed their wonted places and positions, and none appeared the worse for those movements which, in engineering diction would be described, eccentric.

“If I’ve not spoken plainly out,” those were the last words she heard, and to her inexpressible joy these followed; “force of circumstances, Charlotte, alone caused me to halt in my inclination. I did not see my way clear enough to ask you to become an old soldier’s wife before; but if you’ll be content to share my pension—”

She would, and there was her hand as a pledge for her word.

Corporal Crump accepted the guerdon as well became a gallant spirit, and pressing it a little below the Waterloo medal which garnished his breast, he gave a loud explosive kiss upon the widow's lips, sounding not unlike detonating powder.

"While my poor missis lives," said the Corporal, after a slight pause—and a shade of sorrow passed over his features as he spoke—"and Miss Clara remains a forlorn, helpless orphan, Charlotte, we mustn't forget that the pension has some claims upon it. I couldn't give up all the pension for what is called pin money."

"Pin money!"

The hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork thought of a certain private, well-protected secret drawer, the key of which then hung

at her girdle, and laughed pleasantly, not sarcastically, at the idea of pin money.

“I don’t mean to raise false hopes or fabulous expectations concerning my property,” replied she with the smallest approach to the minutest display of vanity; “but for all our earthly wants, dear Richard, and indeed comforts, I have enough—perhaps a little more.”

Corporal Crump’s countenance became illuminated with this intelligence. The “little more” topped it with the cream of perfect satisfaction, and fanned the embers of his affection until they began to glow in a white heat.

“Charlotte,” rejoined he, impressively, “we are not children; not of that age to require being fed with a spoon, and therefore I shall forbear from saying anything which might lay me open to the charge of being spooney. At the same time, if I

were to give vent to all my feelings on this occasion, you'd find some of them as fresh as water-cresses, and in saying that I look with an anxious hope that as little delay as possible will take place before we march to that church, where I'll make you mine, and endow you with those few earthly goods I possess, together with as liberal a share of the pension as circumstances will permit, it's no more than an old soldier *may* say, upon the only security which he has at this moment to offer—his honor."

Mistress Twigg, like a fond happy woman that she was, entertained the most comprehensive faith in all that the corporal asserted, and, therefore, why she considered it necessary to raise the corner of her black silk apron to her eyes at this moment, and go through the ceremony of shedding two tears, cannot be explained. Speculation may trace their source from the fountains

of joy; but there they were, big and—it is supposed—briny.

“I shall ever make your comforts, Richard, the study of those remaining days which may yet be spared me,” sobbed the jolly widow.

“A wife who studies that, Charlotte,” replied he, “knows her duty, and, as a great improvement upon the knowledge, does it.”

“We can’t expect to be happy in this world, or be worthy of blessings,” rejoined Mistress Twigg with the apron still at the corners of her eyes, “unless we make our homes comfortable; and how is a home to be comfortable, unless the husband of it is at peace, and enjoys his ease?”

“Well would it be, Charlotte,” said the Corporal, with a gravity of manner amounting almost to the solemn, “if that question was written in letters of gold in every household in England. Many a man would

then sit by his own fireside, who now makes it his care to keep as wide from it as possible."

The hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork felt flattered at the compliment; and, it is fairly conjectured, that a betrothed scarcely could be found within the belt of this sublunary planet, on better terms with herself and her lover, than Mistress Twigg.

"There is just one thing I will mention," returned she. "You have been generous enough, dear Richard, to speak of my share of the pension. I beg to state that whatever that may be, is at your free disposal. I'll not take one sixpence of it, and if"—the widow drew in a long breath, like the hiss of a stray goose—"I may be guilty of one act of liberality without provoking the censure of my neighbours, and having false motives scored to what I do, without so much as ever thinking of them, let me tell

you that willingly, not grudgingly, Richard, I place at your disposal my savings, and they amount to a sum which, to see clearly, requires no strong magnifying glass. I'll not take upon myself the responsibility," continued the widow, looking down the sides of her nose, "to point out the ways and means by which my savings may be applied in accordance with my own wishes; but should a slender hint not be objectionable, I will be brazen-faced enough to observe, that if the whole is appropriated to the uses of Mrs. Lieutenant Somerset and her pretty daughter, I shall not consider that I saved a farthing, without getting a fully penny by my thrift."

"I could stand cool in some positions," observed Corporal Crump. "I have done so, although I say it; but there's no resisting force like this. Charlotte, you're an angel!" and seizing the object of his affec-

tions in a strong gripe, he would doubtlessly — to apply figurative language — have smothered her with his kisses, had not the chink-wink twang, chink-wink twa-a-ang of a horn suddenly caused him to—still figuratively speaking—ground arms.

“The mail,” whispered Mrs. Twigg, with a finger upon her lip, “the mail’s coming.”

The corporal, in a moment, became bolt upright, stiff, and perpendicular as a ramrod.

“That Jonathan,” said he with a martial frown, “and I had better not meet I think.”

“Not meet?” exclaimed the widow, feigning a degree of astonishment which she most decidedly did not entertain. “I thought you were the best of friends.”

“We don’t always command the force of circumstances,” mysteriously remarked the Corporal. “I’d rather not meet that Jonathan to-night.”

“Come, come, dear Richard,” replied

Mistress Twigg, pleased as every woman is at the display of jealous rivalry for her charms, "you have no cause to pick a quarrel with Jonathan. He always spoke of you as you deserve, and never said a word to me but what might be repeated to your face. Be just to Jonathan," pleaded the widow, "as he has been just to you."

A shout of laughter now broke from the vicinity of the bar, and being taken up, or seconded, by a hoarser description of merriment, the noise was prodigious in the extreme.

"I said so," hallooed a voice, "I said how it would be, widder. A man that goes up the road is sure to come down again. Up pumpkin and down squash. That's your sauce for Michaelmas!"

"What's the toast now?" croaked the Guard. "Is it the King with no heel-taps? Haw, haw, h-a-w."

“Shouldn’t wonder but what he’s got a milder sort by this time, eh, widder?” remarked Jonathan with a wink.

The hostess simpered, that her customers were sometimes rather more than she could manage.

“Take a partner then, widder,” replied Jonathan, “and if I had the choice of being either your sleeping one, or t’other kind, I wouldn’t occupy a whole week to consider of it.”

This observation caused a slight uneasiness in Mistress Twigg’s bosom, and she began to think that it might have been as well that the Corporal and Jonathan had not met.

CHAPTER VI.

THE gossips of Grundy's Green were unanimous in the report of Mrs. Woodbee's and Leonard's return to the Oaks. There could be no doubt whatever as to that fact; but whether they were coerced or induced, whether compelled by the strong arm of the law, or decoyed by more subtle means, remained a subject on which there existed a diversity of opinions, and conflicting statements.

Great was the perplexity also, upon the rumour gaining ground of the serious indisposition of the Squire and his wife. That

both should be attacked at the same time looked truly suspicious, and stories were rife that the soup, flesh, or fowl at dinner was poisoned; but whether accidentally, or otherwise, met with both supporters and defenders.

Some never thought that good would come of such a proud, consequential, hard-hearted man as Squire Woodbee was, and deplored the day that made the great house his. It was a sorry one for the poor of those parts, although they had nothing to say against the lady and Master Leonard. Poor things! they had a kind word for everybody, and how it was such a wife and son belonged to him, passed their understanding.

That bookman, too! they wondered who he could be, and what he looked at the stars so often through a spy-glass for. A few old women shook their heads at such questions, and expressed a determination of

nailing horseshoes on the thresholds of their doors in case he should pass that way. An evil eye that bookman had, and no wonder that Master Leonard withered under it. It was not for them to say all they thought, wise people never did; but if that bookman was not the devil himself, he was a nearer relation than fifth cousin.

To convey an approach to the astonishment which Miss Christina Baxter felt at the turn which things had taken, would be beyond the range of possibility, long as that range unquestionably is. She had been duly informed by the considerate corporal, of the astounding intelligence, fresh as it had arrived at the general shop, of the intended return of her dear friend and pupil of other days. Vague and undefined as the cause appeared for this most unexpected proceeding, Miss Baxter came, by a sudden

jump, to a similar conclusion with Jacob Giles, that it had been adopted from the total absence of any choice, and expressed herself fully justified in the conviction that the amiable partner of the tyrannical Bluebeard would not have cast herself again into his jaws, but that a cruel destiny had made her its helpless victim.

This was Miss Christina Baxter's sentiment, making a complete proselyte of Corporal Crump, who at once dismissed a lurking doubt, concerning the want of discretion which had been exercised by the old Peninsular, in preventing danger to his charge.

"Rest assured, gallant Sir," observed Miss Christina, "truth will discover that there is no blame whatever due to that charming veteran with the wooden leg, or my excellent and persecuted friend. They are sacrifices to a pitiless fate."

"So Miss Clara said," replied the Corporal, musingly.

"And the fair Clara—good, sweet, pretty, modest girl that she is," rejoined Miss Baxter, "is unquestionably correct in her surmise. But the time is so near at hand," continued she, "when all suspense must cease, that I think it will be wiser, and more liberal to prejudice no one and nothing."

The corporal concurred entirely with Miss Baxter, and found his reverence for the little lean governess greatly augmented at the termination of his interview.

It may be better to observe that this exceedingly slight link in the chain of events took place on the day of Mrs. Woodbee's anticipated arrival.

But what was Miss Christina Baxter's surprise at finding a messenger at the door of her domicile on the night of that very self-same day, in the person of Mr. James

Burly, who abruptly informed her that she was wanted as soon as the utmost despatch could transport both herself and her bandbox to the Oaks?

“Bandbox!” exclaimed the affrighted Miss Christina, as the communication completely took her breath away. “May I ask for an explanation, should it be in your power, good Mr. Burly, to render me one?”

“You shall have the best I can give, ‘M,” replied Burly James, “but *reelly* my head feels a’most agoin’ to part in halves clean down the middle. I’ve got my whack of muscle, ‘M,” continued he, tapping the biceps of his arms with an alternate action, “but as for strength of head I can’t boast no great deal.”

Miss Baxter sympathized.

“A little, ‘M, d’ye see,” resumed the knight of the thews and sinews, drawing a hand down his low, square forehead, “seems to

shake up all my i-deas into a kind of thick yeast, which, working into a frothy sort o' wabble, leaves my brains not quite so clear as some of my neighbours' may be found."

Again Miss Baxter sympathized, but there was a slight involuntary impatience blended with her compassion.

"I never did know how to begin to tell anything," continued Mr. James Burly, "and I suppose it's too late now to learn; but if you'll let me help pack your band-box, 'M, we shan't be a-losin' so much time."

Miss Baxter assured good Mr. Burly that, if his communication warranted the effort, her bandbox could be packed, by the assistance of her own hands alone, in less than no time.

"Well, 'M," rejoined he, "you shall soon know as much as I do, and that's not much and never was. In course I needn't tell

you who we expected back again to-day?"

So far Miss Baxter's source of information had taken precedence of Mr. Burly's.

"Very good, 'M," said the knight of the muscles, "we shall get on by an' by I see. Well! they came, and more improved condition I never seed considerin' the time they'd been in trainin'; but more par-tickerly Master Leonard's. Missis, as I put my eye over her, I thought still drawn a little too fine, but there was a bloom on her skin which I hadn't seen for many a day."

"I'm rejoiced to hear you say so, good Mr. Burly," returned Miss Christina Baxter with fervour. "But don't let me interrupt you. Proceed, pray proceed."

"Things seemed to go smoother than any prophet could foresee," continued Burly James, "and Master behaved himself as if

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he had taken a new lesson in manners. If Missis had been a stranger, 'M, and owed him nothin', he couldn't have been more civil."

"How full of joy is such intelligence!" exclaimed Miss Baxter. "Bluebeard, perhaps, is a repentant sinner."

"Bluebeard, 'M!" ejaculated the knight of the muscles, lifting the lids of his light sky-blue eyes.

"Pardon me, good Mr. Burly," added Miss Christina, correcting herself, "I beg that you'll not let my foolish remark interrupt these interesting particulars."

"We must cut 'em short though," returned he, as if a dereliction of duty was making itself palpable through 'the frothy yeast.' "I was ordered to be quick, but it appears to me that I'm terribly afflicted with the slows, 'M."

"Nay, nay," responded Miss Baxter, "do

not reproach yourself with tardiness, good Mr. Burly."

"But I've got to go to 'pothecary Grimes's for a cataplasm on our way," added he, "and it will be ready before the bandbox, I know."

"Cataplasm?" repeated Miss Christina Baxter.

"I think it was a cataplasm," said the knight of the muscles, thoughtfully; "but at any rate its somethin' in the medical line."

"For what—for whom?" asked she.

"Thank'e, 'M, for arskin' that question," replied Burly James. "It's a wonderful assistance to me I do assure ye. Why to say who it's for," continued he, "doesn't exactly lie in my overalls; but the bettin's even that it's either for master or missis."

"What do I hear?" ejaculated Miss Baxter, with alarm.

"Fits," responded Mr. Burly.

Miss Christina raised her hands and stood mutely gazing at her informant.

"They was both took with fits in the same nick o' time," resumed he, "and not bein' used to 'em, fare badly enough, accordin' to 'pothecary Grimes. My father," continued James Burly, "was used to fits all his life, and lived to be a fine, fresh old man notwithstanding'."

"Is there the remotest degree of danger?" gasped Miss Baxter.

"Missis has come round, 'M," responded he, "but master remains quite at the t'other end of queer street."

"Am I then sent for?" inquired Miss Christina, as a new light broke through the ambiguous information.

"That's it," replied the knight of the muscles. "You've hit the right nail on the head, 'M, at last. Missis's orders are for you and bandbox to be with her as soon as

possible, and that I, on no account, was to leave either behind."

"I'm expected then to pass the night—"

"That's it, 'M," interrupted Burly James. "You are as right in that partickler as ever you were wrong in your life."

Miss Christina Baxter heard no more. Rapid, indeed, were the preparations for her departure, and with a speed rarely equalled in ordinary pedestrianism, might she have been seen trotting on her road to the Oaks.

CHAPTER VII.

It was sunset. Golden waves rose and fell upon the walls of that little haven of rest, Jacob's snugger, and the balmy breath of the summer's wind stole through a screen of flowers, decking a stand before the open window.

"Clara," said Mrs. Somerset, raising herself with difficulty, as she turned upon the sofa, "how long have I been sleeping?"

"For nearly an hour, Mamma," replied Clara, cheerfully, "and now that you have

been so good, so very good, tell me that you are better."

"I have often said so, dear one," rejoined her mother, faintly; "but I cannot do so now, not now, Clara," she added.

There was a strange foreboding tone in these words, which drove the tint from Clara's cheek, and, without knowing why, tears started to her eyes.

"Come closer to me," said Mrs. Somerset, "my voice is weak, and I would speak to you now that we're alone, Clara," and she drew her child upon her bosom, and kissed her fondly.

"And never to be parted," replied Clara, "oh tell me that!" she added. "Say that we shall always be together, never, never to be parted."

"Hush, love, hush," rejoined her mother; "'tis this grief I would have you check. The hour approaches, Clara, for your

greatest earthly trial, and for mine, that of our separation."

A wild cry rose, a cry as if a young heart had broken.

"Clara, listen to me," said Mrs. Somerset, calmly; "I have much to say, more, perhaps, than I shall live to tell. Let us waste no moments in useless grief, but rather strive to soothe the pain, pain beyond all mortal power to heal."

Scalding tears streamed from Clara's eyes, but she stifled the choking sobs, and tried to look as her mother wished.

For a few seconds not a word was spoken, the golden waves rose and fell upon the walls, and the flowers sent forth their sweetest perfume.

"Has any one been here during my sleep?" inquired Mrs. Somerset.

"Both Leonard and Miss Baxter called,"

replied Clara, "and will do so again in the course of the evening."

"How is my sister?"

"Better, much better," rejoined Clara, "but is still too weak to leave her bed."

The invalid appeared to repeat these words to herself, and murmured, "Then on earth we shall never meet again."

"Oh, Mamma, say not so!" exclaimed Clara, throwing her arms round her mother. "You are not worse, are you? Tell me that you are not."

"For your sake, if not for mine, dear one," returned Mrs. Somerset, sorrowfully, "would that I could do so!"

"Then let me fetch —."

"Not now, not now," interrupted her mother, dividing the clustering curls from Clara's hot, burning brow, and pressing her lips to it, "none must be near me now, but my own dear child. Often have I heard,"

continued she, with a voice steadied by an effort as she looked earnestly in her daughter's face, " that the world is harsh and uncharitable to the forlorn and helpless, and that those who are in the most need of friends, have to seek them generally in vain. But methinks this scarcely can be so, Clara, for we have found many friends, and few could have been more forlorn and helpless than ourselves. But He who makes the hearth desolate, who causes the widow to mourn, and the orphan to weep, mingles the cup of affliction with mercy. He who directs the storm, stays the hurricane. The hand that unbinds the wind, tempers it. In Him then, dearest, we will put our trust, and pray for that support which comes from Heaven alone."

Clara wept bitterly; but not a sound escaped her.

" For a long, long time," continued Mrs.

Somerset, twining an arm about Clara's waist, and pressing her to her bosom, "have I seen this coming hour, and, as with those generally who delay their duty, it was nigh arriving when too late for its fulfilment."

~~The~~ invalid paused, as if to recruit her exhausted strength.

"The past, Clara," continued she, "as far as concerns yourself, you know. It is of the future, the hidden, unfathomed course which your frail bark must take, dear child, amid life's chequered sea, that I would speak. Think, then, well on what I say, and never let my injunction be blotted from your memory."

"To forget—oh, mother!" exclaimed Clara, "you cannot think that I could forget!"

"Nor do I, dear one," rejoined Mrs. Somerset; "but my thoughts are anxious, and I speak to you as——"

A deadly pallid hue spread itself over the features of the speaker, and the arm embracing Clara fell powerless by her side.

With a cry of terror Clara sprang upon her feet.

"Stay, love, stay," whispered her mother. "do not leave me. I shall be better presently, much better."

Ready to turn and fly for assistance, Clara stood clasping one of her mother's bloodless hands, and looked as motionless as sculptured marble.

"Not yet, Clara," said Mrs. Somerset, with her eyes riveted on her daughter; "not yet; it will not be yet," and again she drew her to her side, with her head resting upon her breast.

"I taught you, Clara," continued her mother. "on the night which made you a little fatherless child, to lisp your infant prayer to God for strength and resignation

under those trials and vicissitudes which it might please Him, for all-wise and inscrutable purposes, to visit you. We joined in our petition that we might bear our burden cheerfully, that we might resist temptation, and be calm under the harsh frowns and menaces of poverty and trouble. It was then that we knelt together; Clara, and supplicated for trust and reliance alone in virtue, in truth, and in God. Do you remember this?"

Remember? Her scalding tears could answer that; but she could not speak.

"Whatever sorrows or danger may beset you, dearest, when I am gone," continued her mother with slightly increased energy, "whatever griefs assail and wring your heart, bend your knee to Him whose attribute is love, and whose ear is ever open to the voice of suffering. Be again the little child when you knelt by your mother's side, and ask for that patience which the sorely

oppressed in spirit need so much. Mourn not as if you cavilled at the Almighty's decrees; but remembering that the loving and beloved in this world must part—that life passeth away like a dream—look beyond the uncertain span of poor mortality, where there are no separations, and where peace, and rest, and eternal joy await the blessed in heaven. Do this, Clara, for your own sake and for mine, and let your promise be sealed upon your dying mother's lips."

"I will, indeed I will," sobbed Clara; "not a word but I'll think of; not a duty but shall be observed; but tell me not that you are dying—oh say not that!" and she clasped her hands together, and wrung them in her agony.

"Kiss me, love," returned Mrs. Somerset, "and while I speak a few words to our kind friends, the corporal and Mr. Giles, seek your chamber, where, I hope, calmer feelings

will take possession of you. You shall not be absent from me long," continued she, seeing the reluctance with which Clara turned to tear herself away from the couch.

And then she was alone.

With ill-concealed trepidation, although each was evidently endeavouring to school his feelings, both Corporal Crump and Jacob Giles made a somewhat abrupt entry into the apartment, as if the summons they had received had shaken them from their propriety.

"My dear Mem," said the little general shopkeeper, stepping forward with the deepest solicitude in his voice and gesture, "do we hear from Miss Clara that you are worse?"

"Far, far worse," replied Mrs. Somerset, holding out a hand to Jacob, and giving the other to the corporal; "but it is not of myself that I would either think or speak

just now. It is," continued she, glancing a look full of gratitude on both, "of you whom I have to be so thankful to, and those I love, and who love me and mine. But the best of friends must part, and the oldest of comrades, Corporal, as you know full well."

Corporal Crump lifted his right hand stiffly to his brow, and saluted this sad truth in silence.

"For all your kindness," resumed Mrs. Somerset, addressing the old soldier, "and years of self-denial, and faithful service, how can I repay you sufficiently with my thanks?"

"I'd rather, Marm," replied the Corporal hoarsely, for he had been too accustomed to see the dying not to know that death was in possession of Jacob's snugger, "I'd rather, Marm," replied he, "that you'd say as little about them as may prove agreeable to yourself. If I have done my duty to

your satisfaction," and he again brought his hand to his forehead, "it's more than I can say of it's being so to my own."

"And what shall I say to you, dear friend?" continued Mrs. Somerset, turning to Jacob, "you whose roof has sheltered us so long?"

"Spare me," responded Jacob as unshed tears rose in his eyes. "Don't say anything about it, Mem, pray don't. I, I can't bear much."

"I must be brief," remarked the invalid as if communing with herself. "My strength is waning fast, and darker shadows are hovering round than those which evening casts."

"Let me go for Doctor Grimes," said Jacob in a voice scarcely articulate with grief. "The cures he works—"

A hand gently pressed upon his arm checked his praise of the apothecary.

"Hark!" cried Mrs. Somerset, "there's

a step upon the stairs," and as she spoke a gentle knock announced the advent of Leonard and Miss Baxter.

"Friends," said the invalid, smiling and extending her arms to greet them, "friends—dear beloved friends!"

"Let me hope that Clara's fears are exaggerated," responded Miss Baxter with a voice trembling with emotion as she knelt and saluted the invalid's cheek.

A shake of the head was the silent answer.

"My sister is unable to be here?" said Mrs. Somerset.

"Alas!" rejoined Leonard, "that it should be so; but she is incapable still of quitting her bed."

"Tell her," continued she, "that she was with my latest thoughts, and as in life I loved her well, so in death that love grew stronger. And now, before we part, one

word about my child--poor, helpless girl! You will all befriend the orphan; that I know; and if no earthly rewards compensate your charitable hearts, yet shall they be requited where the worm preys not, and treasures remain imperishable."

"Fear nothing," rejoined Corporal Crump, steadying his nether lip, "on her account, Marm. We will—" but he could say no more, and he wheeled suddenly towards the open window as if an object had attracted his attention in that quarter.

"There is one thing more I wish to add," said Mrs. Somerset with perceptibly increasing faintness, "and that I must be pardoned for imparting to Leonard with no witness by. Give me your hands," continued she, "before you go; you shall not be absent from me long."

Conforming to her wish, Leonard was left alone with the dying.

Let it be written
about the name of
the Lord our God
and our King is
the Lord of the
universe.

The Lord our God
with the Lord of the
universe is a perfect being
and our God is the

told of a mother's love, imperishable as the soul from which it springs, and over which death can claim no victory.

Her look—the last, fond look—was fixed upon her child.

Soft shadows fell upon the golden waves. Faint and fainter yet they flitted round, lingering but not departing.

And then a plaintive voice rose in tremulous accents, “Father of all mercies, vouchsafe to listen to an orphan's prayer!”

All fell upon their knees save the corporal, who stood erect with a hand to his brow in an attitude of the profoundest attention and respect.

“Thou to whom all hearts be open,” supplicated Clara, “knowest the sufferings of mine! Give me strength to bear them with meekness, for thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; and yet remembering my infirmities, bestow the clemency of

2. THE BLOOD OF THE VILLAGE

THEY WENT. But the sword of the blessed
and their efforts to save the holy land
in vain. The chief of the army, and the
warrior of the village. They to save the
land. It was not in the "old days before"

"before" said the Corporal.

The soldiers responded, and the golden
words were heard.

CHAPTER IX.

STRANGE events had taken place in rapid succession of late, and that connoisseur of news, intelligence, and reports, the apothecary's stiff partner, felt an acute want of breath, as each came upon her like a galvanic shock, which she fervently trusted might not prove chronic. At the same time, her appetite grew on what it fed. It may be erroneously supposed, from repeatedly drawing the reader's attention to the apothecary and Mrs. Doctor Grimes, when transformed into a kind of human sandwich

between the domestic sheets, that they passed more than the mean time, by Shrewsbury clock, in a dormant state; but the conjecture would be founded in error. They were not unusually early to bed, or extraordinarily reluctant to rise, and it has been asserted, as regards the latter, at least, in and around Grundy's Green, by venom-tongued envy, neither particularly healthy, wealthy, nor wise.

Be this as it may, there were Mrs. Doctor Grimes and the apothecary, as they have been before seen in their respective night-caps, the one intricately frilled, and the other terminating in a plain and unpretending tassel.

Mrs. Doctor Grimes cleared her voice with a cough, sounding not unlike the sharp bark of a fox. It was a way she had, and Mrs. Doctor Grimes made it a rule to indulge in those ways which pleased her most.

The apothecary's ears pricked forward.

"I shall be sorry to disturb your repose," said the stiff partner of the firm, with a jerk of the bed clothes practically refuting the allegation, "quite sorry; but if you *can*, Sir, deny yourself a few moments of sullen pleasure by assuming a degree—limited as it must be—of confidence with the wife of your bosom, she will endeavour to forgive—if not forget—a portion of those injuries which seem to form part and parcel of the marriage lot."

"Really, Margaret," replied the apothecary, "I am not aware of being systematically cruel."

"Systematically cruel?" repeated Mrs. Doctor Grimes, raising her voice. "Hoighty toighty, Sir! Do you flatter yourself for a single moment that I should tamely submit to the most distant approach to systematic cruelty?"

"By no means," replied the apothecary.
"I should not for one instant consider it possible that you would do so, chuck."

"Come, come," rejoined the stiff partner, "no foolery, Sir, if you please. I disapprove of that obsolete term chuck, and having conveyed my sentiments upon this subject, you'll study your own comfort by avoiding a repetition of it for the future."

The apothecary promised that it should be forthwith expunged from his vocabulary.

"So far, then, I will endeavour to be satisfied," resumed Mrs. Doctor Grimes, "although, Heaven knows, I've little cause to be."

"I'm sure, Margaret," expostulated the subdued dispenser of nauseous compounds, "I do my best —"

"Best! yes," snapped the sharer of his bed and partaker of his board, "I don't say *that*, Sir, do I? If I did not take care that

you did your best, partial blame would rest on my shoulders. But what is your best, Sir, let me ask ?”

“ There’s my professional reputation, Margaret,” ventured the apothecary by way of a mild reproof. “ I beg you’ll think of that.”

“ Your professional reputation !” echoed Mrs. Doctor Grimes with a sneer which, although not seen, might be heard in the dark, like the sneeze of a cat. “ Fortunately for me,” she continued, “ that I possess a stomach not easily turned. The world might call it strong, but fortified would best express it.”

“ Visit me with whatever vials of your wrath you please,” rejoined the apothecary in a melodramatic tone; “ but spare, Margaret, spare my professional reputation.”

“ He, he, he !” laughed Mrs. Doctor. “ He, he, he ! Poor misguided, duped, and confiding victims.”

"May I inquire, without offence, Margaret," said the apothecary with serious apprehensions, "to whom you refer as poor, misguided, duped, and confiding victims?"

"Run your fore-finger down each column of your ledger," rejoined Mrs. Doctor Grimes, with wormwood in every word. "From the day you first rolled a pill or shook a bottle, to this, and every Christian and surname you come to is one of them."

"Margaret," returned the apothecary, "I cannot submit to this. I shall leave my bed."

"As it would chill me, Sir," added she, with a determination which he thought it advisable not to oppose, "you'll do nothing of the sort. I am merely giving you a little bit of my mind, which is nothing more than my privilege and my pleasure."

"It was not always so," said the apothecary.

cary moistly, for his injuries moved him to tears. "It was not always so, Margaret."

"I am quite aware of that," responded Mrs. Doctor Grimes, "and will therefore not trouble you, Sir, to waste your breath in informing me of what I already know. We all have our moments of weakness," continued she, "and I am far from being regardless or forgetful of mine."

His professional reputation having been stabbed to the quick, the apothecary was bleeding inwardly, and he felt it prudent to abandon the unequal contest.

"Ho!" ejaculated the stiff partner, after a slight check, "you're sulky now, Sir, I suppose. Is that it?"

"No," replied the poor little apothecary of Grundy's Green, "not sulky, Margaret, but wounded."

"In that case," she rejoined, "you'd bet-

THE END OF THE VILLAGE.

“Let me use some of your boasted skill upon yourself, although if the case be a serious one, and my advice was asked, I should suggest the probability of calling in the first old woman you might happen to meet in the village.”

This was the wildest cut of all, and the opportunity winced and flushed under the scrutiny of her sister.

“I have generally remarked,” said he, feeling there was no avail in either silence or submission, — that these unhappy differences Margaret appear to arise from what I may call, nothing. I am aware, from the experience of a former occasion, that it is useless to ask what have I done? but may I inquire, in order to put an end to the present one, what you require me to do?”

Mrs. Doctor Grimes soliloquized in a tone that no whisper ever equalled in soft-

ness, "Having oiled the screw well, I'll now proceed to turn it."

Her voice was again husky, and she cleared away the impediment with the same sharp, fox-like bark.

"Yielding to your express desire," replied Mrs. Doctor Grimes aloud, "as a weakness for which I ought to be ashamed of myself, I will endeavour to be as explicit as possible. It's my wish," continued she, "to learn generally the state of circumstances, as they may have presented themselves to your notice throughout the day; but in order that no mistake should arise, I'll proceed to put those questions which comprehend the greatest interest."

"Do, Margaret," rejoined the apothecary, greatly relieved with the prospect of a cessation of hostilities; "I'll answer every one."

"That I'll be bound you will," returned

1. Die ...
 2. ...
 3. ...
 4. ...
 5. ...
 6. ...
 7. ...
 8. ...
 9. ...
 10. ...

of *that* tale. Where was the money to come from, I should like to be informed?"

"But it is not because that we are ignorant of the resources——"

"Yes, it is," interrupted the stiff partner, "that's the very cause for any one but a fool's believing ridiculous trash. Seeing's believing ; but what else is, I should like to know?"

"*I* was paid," argued the apothecary, "every sixpence."

"You must have blushed to have taken it," returned Mrs. Doctor Grimes. "However, let that pass, as you're qualified by law to perpetrate extortion. And what is to become of the man Crump?" continued she, in a caustic tone.

"They talk of a marriage being settled between him and Mistress Twigg," replied he, meekly; for he feared the subject might prove an exciting one.

"The is—dead!" exclaimed the stiff partner. "It's come at last at last! Upon my word, Madam, I never had given myself infinite pains in attempting to pick up nothing. A private matter, which I dare say's been before you many a time, and shown the excellent quality of his legs in battle, by running away faster than any one else."

"My Madam," ejaculated the apothecary, inter-posing at the Elbe, "he wears a Valerian medicine."

"A proper constitution," rejoined Mrs. Lovell. "or else he got out of a physician's shop."

The apothecary groaned, and began to look wistfully at the night-bell above him.

"What mixtures we shall have with our new husband!" sneered the stiff partner. "And then the caps we shall wear, and the silks we shall buy—why the Harrow and Pitchfork won't hold us all. We must have

the roof raised a story I'm sure, and the doors widened."

The apothecary deemed it wiser to say nothing in answer to this explosion.

"And how is that Mrs. Runaway Wood-bee?" resumed Mrs. Doctor Grimes. "If I had the opportunity of advising her unfortunate husband, I should suggest the expediency of fixing a heavy chain on one of her ancles at least, and having it riveted to the bed-post."

"My patient is not so well to-day, Margaret," simply replied the apothecary.

"If all your patients were in the same state," rejoined she, for the announcement of Mistress Twigg's anticipated union with Corporal Crump turned the microscopic quantity of the milk of human kindness in her bosom into curds, "it would not occasion the smallest astonishment in any one who knew you as well as I do; but the less

[illegible][illegible]

"What business is he making out of this?" "That is to say, supposing any one in the world will the present deep down a long distance upon him of swallow-
ing such stuff?"

"The Society continues, Margaret," re-
sponded the speaker, with spirits below

Zero, "in a state of extreme danger. The blood vessels extending across the os frontis—"

"Os fiddlesticks!" interrupted Mrs. Doctor Grimes. "I want none of your outlandish gibberish here, Sir, and if you think to blind your ignorance by—"

"Ha, ha!" His heart leaped again. The bell! glad tidings. No matter for whom—profitable or profitless. It called him hence, and that was enough.

CHAPTER IX.

However sad—for she had her sorrowful moments like other mortals—Miss Christina Baxter might occasionally be, she possessed that rarest of virtues of concealing, if not forgetting, her own cares in order that she might lessen those of her friends and neighbours—but to be a neighbour of Miss Baxter was to be her friend.

The heart of the poor little lean Samaritan beat with unusual depression, and as she stuck the skewer of a poker into the miniature fire, to raise a flame under the hissing,

spluttering, copper kettle, she made as much noise as possible for the purpose, probably, of driving away those imps of evil the demons blue, by whom she appeared to be encircled. At the conclusion of this feat she rubbed the bright and knobby end of the poker smoothly down her nose, and seemed to be refreshed by the movement.

“My dear Clara,” remarked she to her companion, who sat on the opposite side of the fire-place, “I’ll certainly light the candle, and make an unusually good cup of tea this evening; for really there’s anything but a cheerful appearance about us, and there is nothing more catching, not even the typhus fever itself or the measles, than what a maiden aunt of mine—poor dear! she was attached to cats and white mice—used to call the dumps. If you have the dumps, as she frequently observed, lock yourself in a room and fling the key

out of window, so that nobody can get near you, and you can get near nobody. Then either cry, grumble, growl, howl or—the wicked maiden aunt sometimes added if no clergyman was near—swear at your ease; but be particular that not a creature hears you, and never leave *that* room until fully convinced of having made a fool of yourself. That was my maiden aunt's cure for the dumps," concluded Miss Baxter, with a perfect triumph over her own.

"But we cannot control our spirits," replied Clara; "they so much depend upon the circumstances by which we are surrounded."

"Doubtlessly so," rejoined Miss Baxter, "but by the dumps my maiden aunt—she who was attached to cats and white mice—rather referred to a bad temper, I suspect, than the gloom which care, of necessity, *must* bring."

"Ah!" sighed Clara, "how little of life is without its gloom! I never felt happy yet without the dread of coming evil."

"Yes, my dear," returned Miss Christina Baxter, blowing the cotton wick of a candle into a shower of sparks, as a preliminary to a permanent ignition; "but that is not exactly the Christian trust which we are desired to put in the future. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof,' says the Divine law, and if we are in continual fear of the succeeding hour, it is at direct variance with the injunction which bids us not to take too much heed of the morrow."

"And yet apprehension for the future," added Clara, "seems to be linked to our very being. Who can say that he feels his happiness secure even for a moment?"

"Certainly not," said Miss Baxter, "if his happiness is based on a perishable foundation; but we are taught," continued she,

“not to build our houses upon the sand, and our own senses tell us that if we do so they must fall. I am not a lecturer or philosopher, Heaven knows! but what I have seen of the world forces upon me this conclusion, that as everything belonging to it is ever on the change, that as everything on which we can raise an earthly hope must perish, happiness can alone be attained by looking beyond the world. Too many of us live day by day, as if we were to live for ever, instead of hourly approaching that end here, which is but the commencement of an immortal existence. Selfish, shortsighted human nature labours for the shadow of happiness, not for the substance. It depends for satisfaction on that which of necessity must fail, and hence the disappointment, trouble, vexation, and misery, of which all complain, because all seek, or make no effort to avoid them.”

The candle now gave forth a bright, cheerful light, and the diminutive copper kettle sent forth a volume of curling, hissing steam, spurred to a proud display by the fierce crackling furnace of a whole quarter of a peck of the best Wall's End underneath. The scene, on a small scale, was quite inspiring, and by the time Miss Christina had collected and arranged the tea things in due order upon the table, cut the bread and butter into the veriest shavings, and brewed that beverage, poetically described as possessing refreshing properties, without those of inebriation, any additional luxury must have proved superfluous in the extreme.

Events which appear to be purely accidental are, sometimes as fortuitous as, on the other hand, they occasionally present a very different aspect. Just as the last touch of the pencil was being given to the

"I am sure that Miss Baxter was among the first to see the value of the machine as a first grade, and I am sure that she was the first to see the value of the machine as a first grade, and I am sure that she was the first to see the value of the machine as a first grade."

"I am sure that Miss Baxter was among the first to see the value of the machine as a first grade, and I am sure that she was the first to see the value of the machine as a first grade."

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to meet with it, "nothing, I should say, at a small venture of labouring under a great mistake, could be more in union with the feelings of all parties;" and then Miss Baxter began to busy herself among the teacups and saucers with a spirit which threatened to demolish the entire set.

"How is my dear aunt?" asked Clara, turning her eyes with melancholy tenderness upon Leonard.

"Greatly improved," replied he, "and she desired me to give her best love, and say that she hopes to be able to come and see you to-morrow."

"That will, indeed, be a pleasure!" rejoined Clara, but tears flowed down her cheeks notwithstanding; for the thought flashed across her mind that the last time they met, she little dreamt of never again doing so, except as an orphan.

"And permit me to inquire after the

health of —" Miss Christina Baxter was as near as possible adding Bluebeard; but good breeding arrived just in time to the rescue, and she managed to swallow, if not eat, the obnoxious term. With the aid of a slight cough Miss Baxter was safe.

"You would say my father," returned Leonard. "A more favourable account was given of him this evening," continued he, "but the fever continued so far unsubdued, that he remains quite unconscious of all that passes around him."

"Poor gentleman!" exclaimed Miss Christina, for she pitied all who suffered, and would have relieved the pain of an enemy—had she possessed one—at the full cost and charge of her own pains and penalties.

"Is there still great danger?" asked Clara.

"I think not," replied her cousin, "or at

any rate, no cause exists, Mr. Grimes says, for fear of an immediate change for the worst. I saw him a short time before leaving," continued he, "but he did not know me."

Miss Baxter thought that this want of knowledge was not confined to the present moment, but she kept the reflection to herself.

That time flies fast the poet sings, and never did he appear stronger or fleeter on the wing than at this small tea-party, under the roof of the domicile of Miss Christina Baxter. She did not see, of course, that one of Leonard's hands held a corresponding member belonging to Clara under the table, nor was there any necessity for her observing that when her back was turned, in the act of refilling the teapot, upon two distinct and several occasions, that a strange sound saluted her ears, not unlike the chirp of a

young bird. Miss Baxter knew how deceptive the effects of acoustics were, and that vibrations in the atmospheric regions, caused by vibrations of the sounding body, acting in pulsations, or concentric movements, could never be trusted with any degree of certainty. She therefore paid as little attention as possible to what she heard, and as to seeing, why unless she went to the inconvenience of dropping on her knees or stooping and peeping at considerable trouble, under the table, how was Miss Baxter to discover what was passing in that concealed quarter?

CHAPTER XI.

SUCH a strange piece of mechanism is the forked animal man, so incomprehensible in his tastes, prejudices, likings, and dislikings, that even to himself he must be a marvel and a mystery. As well, or indeed better, might an attempt be made to discover the cause of water finding its own level, a total want of friendship among women, or a donkey's love for thistles, as the search for the hidden whys for his inexplicable wherefores. He is as totally ignorant of them himself as any of his more inquisitive neighbours, who,

as a matter of course, profess to know much more of the secret springs moving the machinery of his actions than he does. They can tell—can those inquisitive neighbours—the ins and outs and roundabouts of everybody and everything; but

“Great negative! how vainly would the wise
Inquire, define, distinguish, teach, devise,
Didst thou not stand to point their dull philosophies.”

The old Peninsular had been happy in Paradise, and, unlike his great ancestor Adam, sighed not for an Eve to share his Eden. Satisfied with his early and late vegetables, gratified with the profits and occupation of catching the linnets and such small deer, and contented with the snug little carpet trade, Bill Stumpit could scarcely place his hook upon his breast and say, with truth, that there existed a wish on earth but met with a ready supply to the demand. This, however, referred rather to

the past than the present, for "a change had come o'er the spirit of his dream;" and the old Peninsular felt no longer that absolute contentment which had been both his pride and happiness to enjoy for the long lease of upwards of forty years. But it now seemed, like the longest that was ever yet engrossed on parchment, to be open to the encroachments of time, and if not expired, yet on the eve of expiring.

To his lot, as before has been alleged, without the perfectly smallest fear of contradiction, the old Peninsular was reconciled; but the vegetables became neglected and choked with weeds, the songs of the linnets lost their charm, and as for the carpet business, he positively refused to fulfil several of the most important and profitable orders.

Things could not remain long in this

state, and therefore it is superfluous to say, they did not.

Among the many inhabitants of Hampstead Vale there lived a broker, a man with keen sensibilities concerning the value of goods, chattels, and effects, both moveable and immoveable. To this quick-sighted, quick-scented broker Bill Stumpit repaired one night when the moon was down, and down beyond the probability of an immediate rise, and then and there created no little astonishment in the broker's breast, by offering him in one lot, the stock, crop, and good-will of Paradise Lodge.

"I'll sell 'em all," said the old Peninsular, recklessly, "without reserve."

Caution was one of the most striking characteristics of the broker of Hampstead Vale, and a few succeeding seconds were occupied in satisfying himself, by a close

inspection, that Bill Stumpit was quite sober and completely rational.

There being no outward or visible signs of his condition being otherwise than composed and reasonable, the broker began to entertain the notion of turning a penny by the bargain.

"The furniter," observed the broker by way of 'crabbing' the articles, "is old and ricketty."

"But clean and free from bugs," added Bill Stumpit, with a flourish of the bit of British oak.

"Consisting of?" returned the broker prepared to make a mental inventory.

"Three stump bedsteads and a shake down, with sheets, blankets, pillows, bolsters, and rugs to match," replied Bill Stumpit.

"Good," briefly responded the broker of Hampstead Vale, lotting the articles enumerated in his brain.

“Six rush-bottomed chairs, four ditto of wood, a deal table, and a frying pan,” continued the old Peninsular.

“Proceed,” remarked the broker, calculating the intrinsic value of the respective household goods with a rapidity which great practice only could have accomplished.

“A blue washing basin with the willow pattern,” resumed the veteran; “two ditto plain white, and other crockery.”

The broker nodded.

“Fifty-seven bird cages, large, small, and breeding,” continued the old Peninsular, “fourteen linnets, six goldfinches, nine red poles, three hedge sparrows, one tom-tit, and a blackbird.”

“Can give but little for this lot,” said the cautious broker. “I dont like to buy things that eat.”

“Two saucepans, one gridrion, and a

rolling pin," added the old Peninsular, "as good as new."

"All right," returned the broker.

"A washing tub and a warming pan, pail and flat iron, a clothes horse, and a musket."

The broker was prepared.

"A fancy portrait, in a black ebony frame, gilt, and colored, of His Right Honorable Grace the Duke of Wellington, leading Bonyparte by the nose, with Marshal Blucher a-stirring up the latter with the ramrod of a piece of flying artillery."

"Anything more?" asked the broker of Hampstead Vale.

"A water-butt and a pepper-box, two pewter saltcellars, and a cut-glass mustard-pot."

"Antique or modern?" inquired the broker, looking out of the extreme corners of his eyes.

"Ancient," briefly replied Bill Stumpit.

The broker signified that he was ready to go on with the valuation.

"Half-a-dozen of real German silver teaspoons, one large ditto for gravy, a bottle-jack, dripping-pan, and door mat."

The broker had them down in his schedule as soon as named.

"There may be a few more odds and ends," continued the old Peninsular, with prodigal generosity, "but those I'll throw in."

"Three-pun-ten," observed the broker, diving his hands into the pockets of his trousers, and throwing his head on one side, "would be about the marketable value, I should say."

"Hand over the coin," rejoined the old Peninsular, "for I'm off at break of day."

"You'll be missed in the neighbourhood," remarked the broker of Hampstead Vale. "What is the cause of this move? Not rent is it?"

“Rent?” repeated Bill Stumpit, as if his honor had been touched, “who says rent? I have paid my rent, Sir, like a Christian, and the Great Mogul was never more punctual. Who says rent?”

“No offence,” replied the broker, finding himself on slippery ground. “I meant no offence, but our business—”

“Is sometimes that of other folks,” added the veteran. “Isn’t that it?”

The broker felt the reproof, and thought it advisable to pay the “three-pun-ten,” without further observation.

The stars were just beginning to fade as the light of day threw a burnished streak of gold across the east, when the old Peninsular issued from the garden gate leading to and from Paradise Lodge. With folded hook and arm he stood contemplating the resolve which he had taken, and hastily put in execution. It was late in life, so quoth

he to his inward self, to turn his back upon the home which had sheltered him so long. He had been used for many a year to look upon it as the last quarters he should occupy until that roll-call was made, which few are prepared to obey, although none can resist.

“Three-pun-ten !” said Bill Stumpit, with a sigh. “I’ve sold the lot, stock and crop, for three-pun-ten ;” and then rubbing hard the tip of his nose with the point of the iron hook, he wheeled upon his bit of British oak, and, shouldering a small bundle, containing his wardrobe, in a blue and white spotted handkerchief, began to employ his powers of locomotion by placing Paradise Lodge gradually in the rear.

CHAPTER XII.

SINCE the night he had had her in his arms—since that night he had borne her insensible form to her chamber, Doctor Starkie had not seen either Alice or her husband, and was totally unconscious of the origin of the scene which presented itself upon the alarm being given.

Like all profoundly cunning men, he thought the game that *he* was playing was far too deep for discovery, and relied upon his own skill alone to achieve the object of his desire. He believed, and almost hoped,

that some violent, ungovernable paroxysm of rage had produced the illness of the one, while terror was the cause of the indisposition of the other. The Oxford double-first prize-man reckoned not that his mask was seen through, or, at least, so suspected of being the hypocrite's, that Alice Woodbee determined to hold no terms with him; but, let the consequences be what they may, to defy all rather than keep the knowledge of his guilty passion from her husband—her husband still.

Upon her place of refuge being discovered, she felt the truth of the threat of her persecutor, that she could not escape from him. She knew that it would be hopeless to struggle in the snare, and therefore pretended to believe that he was honest in his protestations of contrition, in order that she might, through his boasted influence over her husband, obtain a friendly recep-

tion for herself and Leonard, and above all a patient hearing of that which she had to reveal. To return to the roof she had left with no interference to save her from his wrath and wounded pride, shook her woman's heart; but a written promise came pledging his honour to receive them as became a gentleman, and Alice remembered who had wrung it from him. So far, however, her purpose was served, and instead, perhaps, of being forced to submit to some cruel or humiliating indignity, she had no cause whatever to complain of any want of outward kindness, whatever might be more deeply rooted.

Burning to justify herself in the eyes of him who had so deeply wronged her, in the supposition that she had acted merely in perverse defiance of his authority, and groundless complaint of the harsh treatment which Leonard had received at the hands of

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Dr. Starkie, Alice put in execution her resolve the earliest moment that the opportunity presented itself.

In the sombre and still hour, which before has been referred to, the injured wife and mother recounted a history of her woes and insults. She told him in words that were evidence of themselves of the truth she uttered, words which spoke of patient suffering, of a soul without guilt, of a bruised and broken spirit; but one in which no revenge or rankling poison lurked. She told him, and he believed her, that to save their child from a fate far worse than the grave—a living death—the loss of his tottering mind, she had braved the dangers of fleeing from the shelter of his roof to go she knew not where. She told him of the long, long anxious days and sleepless nights she had passed in watching the flickering spark, and what joy the gradual return of

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reason had brought to her almost hopeless heart. She told him of the humble home and friends she had met with, of their care and solicitude for Leonard's health and happiness, and, in praising these, held up a mirror before Tobias Woodbee which reflected a picture of his own blind pride, and miserable selfishness.

There could be no secrets now.

Event followed on event. It was now that he learned that the stranger, whom he had slightly heard of as Jacob Giles's lodger, was the heroine of the tale he had so lately told, and that the pretty girl he sometimes met in his rambles, and designated, as he was informed, the Belle of the Village, was the daughter of his successful rival, Lieutenant Somerset. It was now he learned that his wife had denied herself for years every luxury and comfort that he would not miss, to assist her un-

happy sister, and how his increasing thrift—she would not call it by a harsher term—rendered it difficult, at last, to keep her and her child from the pangs of abject poverty. With declining health, he learned that it had been arranged between the sisters that Mrs. Somerset should come and live in seclusion in the neighbourhood of the Oaks, so that they might occasionally be together without giving offence to him.

All this he was told, and more.

In those few, brief minutes the pages of his past life were opened, and there was not one, no, not one, that he could wish to read again. All his plans and schemes were like broken bubbles or crumbled dust. Every one plotted against them, and there he was, as he knew full well, neither loved nor feared.

It was a painful, humiliating truth for Tobias Woodbee. He had never cared for

the good opinion of any one, but that for himself, which he had long entertained with undiminished strength, began to evaporate with a speed which he little anticipated.

“ Fooled, fooled ! ” exclaimed he with bitterness ; and these were the last words he uttered.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE little dark back settlement in the rear of the general shop contained, one evening, when the business of the day was done, two companions of long standing, and union of tastes and sentiments.

"What I shall do when you're gone," said Jacob, dolefully, "is more than I can tell."

"Cheer up, man!" replied the Corporal. "Why you'll pass your evenings in our bar-parlour, to be sure," continued he, "and feel as blithe as a bird."

“Ah!” rejoined Jacob,” but there are other times besides evenings, and I’ve been used to company for all hours of late; and habit is like one’s skin, d’ye see, we get used to it.”

“There’s Bridget,” returned Corporal Crump, with sly humour twinkling in his eyes. “You won’t be left quite alone.”

“Poor Bridget!” exclaimed Jacob Giles. “Her temper was never of the best, and increasing age and deafness seldom act as improvements.”

“But drill and strict discipline,” said Corporal Crump, “work marvellous changes. Think what she is, and what she was.”

“Thanks to your generalship,” added Jacob, “Bridget is certainly better in all respects; but,” and he shook his head despondingly, “I’m afraid there’ll be a relapse.”

“Keep up the drill,” responded the old soldier, “there’s nothing like drill.”

"The worst of all qualified for drilling" answered the little general cheerfully.

"That's true," said the Corporal, throwing up his hands and raising a significant shrug. "Remember that when you are in contact with the enemy, the only way to be sure of success is to be sure of your own discipline. Some things which are done with them, comrades, would not be looked like parades by ourselves."

"That's exactly my opinion," replied the little general, "and as the situation within was not such with the very Bridges will be soon resolved again. I fear."

"That's all right," rejoined Corporal Cheever. "The articles of war must be revised. I shall step in now and then." "Remember that," said go through some very exercises of good manners with her friend. "There's nothing like drill."

“ You are a fortunate man, Corporal,” observed the little general shopkeeper, with a slight moan.

“ Well,” ejaculated the old soldier, “ I’ve known some of my comrades unluckier than myself. In a charge at Talavera, there were two cut down right and left of me, and I got off with a bit of a scratch.”

“ I was not alluding to those deeds of fame which must live for all time in song and story,” replied Jacob, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm ; “ but referred particularly to the domestic position which you are about taking up.”

“ You think then, Jacob,” rejoined the veteran, “ that I may be called fortunate in that particular?”

“ As a defender of my country,” returned the little general shopkeeper, “ I could not stand by and see you made a martyr of at the shrine of matrimony. No,” continued

Jacob, "I would long since have warned you of danger, like the pilot fish is supposed to warn the whale, and a small blue bird does the rhinoceros, provided there had been any caution necessary, but—" and then he lowered his voice, "Mistress Twigg is no common widow, she's no man-swallower or—" Jacob paused and looked over both his right and left shoulders to see that nobody was near, "she might have swallowed *me*," he added, throwing himself back in his chair to mark the anticipated startling effect on the nerves of the corporal.

To his chagrin, however, the effect was not so startling as expected.

"Flash in the pan, eh?" said Corporal Crump. "No matter, comrade; clear your touchhole and prime again!"

"No," replied Jacob Giles, "I shall never do that now. It was my first and my last

speculation in that kind o' goods, and I'm only glad that my loss is your gain."

"Spoken like a generous-hearted Briton," rejoined the old soldier, giving Jacob his hand to shake across the table which separated them. "Spoken like a generous-hearted Briton," repeated he.

Scarcely had the sentence been concluded when a strange sound became audible from without, as if some one was perambulating the general shop mounted on stilts.

Both rose from their chairs, with a simultaneous movement for the purpose of making a discovery of the cause of the disturbance, and as Jacob Giles took the precedence of the order of their going, the corporal felt almost electrified at hearing him send forth a screech denoting the most acute pain.

"Thunder and lightning!" ejaculated Corporal Crump. "What is the matter?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" roared Jacob.

"Thunder —;" but the exclamation was cut short in the repetition.

"It's only I," cried a well-known voice, for the whistle once heard was not likely to be forgotten. "Don't ye know me?"

"If not his ghost," said the Corporal, "that's Bill Stumpit a-blowing."

"To be sure," replied the old Peninsular. "I'm your late comrade in rank and file, square and line. But get a candle and let's see who's this caught in a trap."

"Oh!" hallooed Jacob, "my foot, my foot. Oh! oh! oh!"

"I shall swear presently," returned Corporal Crump, "I know I shall! What screw is loose with you, Jacob?"

"I'm lamed for my mortal life," shouted the little general shopkeeper. "Oh! oh!"

"Why if I don't begin to think," returned Bill Stumpit, reflectively, "that I've

been pounding my bit of British oak upon my neighbour's toes here. I beg your pardon, friend," continued he, "but let me take it off, for I'm sure it's been there long enough."

"Thank you," replied Jacob, relieved from his painful situation, "I'm exceedingly obliged to you, I'm sure;" and he limped to his seat in the back settlement with lively impressions of what the rack must have been in the most barbarous of ages.

"Attention!" cried Corporal Crump. "Let every man hold his breath, and listen to the word of command. Stand at ease while I strike a light."

"Stand at ease!" repeated the little general shopkeeper, drawing in his breath between his clenched teeth, "I shall never do that again I know."

Deftly the corporal threw a spark upon a prepared stratum of tinder, and, through the

medium of a brimstone match, ignited the ordinary dip which, throwing its effulgent light like the sun, from a radiated surface, made these opaque objects visible within its reach, which otherwise must have remained concealed.

"And it's really you," remarked the Corporal, holding the ordinary dip above his head, and throwing a stronger light by placing a hand between him and the object of his inspection. "It's really you in your own flesh, bone, and blood, Bill Stumpit, is it?"

"The identical bit of steel," replied the old Peninsular, and then the two old veterans grappled with hand and hook, and danced a slight jig as an act of publicly celebrating the joy of their meeting.

"What brought you here?" asked the Corporal, cutting a double shuffle.

"My prop of British oak," replied the

old Peninsular in triumph; "and although worn as fine as a needle at the point, hang me but I'd have ground him to sawdust to the knee but I'd have come!"

"You would, eh?" rejoined Corporal Crump.

"So help me, potatoes!" returned Bill Stumpit, with an expression of religious fanaticism.

"My eyes then behold," said Jacob Giles, still rubbing the injured foot, "that hero of a hundred fights, the ancient Peninsular?"

"What remains of him," rejoined the Corporal, "you now can behold at your leisure, comrade. But when a man becomes a stump," continued he, "or kind of pollard, he requires a wonderful deal of nourishment. Are you thirsty?"

"As a mackerel," replied the old Peninsular, dropping himself into a chair, "and

by the free leave and willing consent of the present company," continued he, "I'll unlimber my bit of British oak, for after a march, I like to stick him in a corner."

"Make yourself at home, celebrated individual," rejoined Jacob, still rubbing his contused foot, "and whatever my homely store affords, you shall be thrice welcome to."

In a remarkably short space of time—considering what was done—Bill Stumpit had his bit of British oak lodged in a corner of the back settlement, and the corporal, from a familiar knowledge of where just to put his hands on things, ornamented the hospitable board with more than was requisite for the improvement of the physical exhaustion of a Prince of the blood royal.

"And now," said Corporal Crump, after duly assisting to moisten what remained of the clay of his old comrade, and seeing that

he was getting in tune for a little examination in chief, "what has brought you here, Bill Stumpit?"

The hero of a hundred fights pointed in silence to the bit of British oak which stood within a few inches of his elbow.

"You don't mean to lead us to suppose that you padded it?" added the Corporal, lifting his eyebrows.

"Every inch of five score miles," replied the old Peninsular, taking his three-cornered felt hat from his bald and polished head and pitching it dexterously over the fork of the bit of British oak.

"But why not ride?" asked Jacob.

"Can't trust myself off the ground," said the old Peninsular, in a mild kind of whistle. "My remainders," continued he, pointing to his one leg, one arm, and one eye, "won't do for cavalry movements."

"This is something to listen to, this is!"

observed Corporal Crump, "and if one's eyes were not used to astonishment they'd begin to smart presently I expect. What the devil has become of Paradise?"

"Sold," replied Bill Stumpit, draining a glass containing a preponderating quantity of brandy to water.

"Sold?" exclaimed the Corporal.

"As I'm a sinner," rejoined the old Peninsular; "in one lot, Dicky," continued he, "stock and crop."

"Have you a strait-waistcoat in this part of the country?" asked Corporal Crump, addressing the little general shopkeeper. "For it's my opinion we shall want one presently."

"Give me a few minutes' breathing time," said Bill Stumpit, tapping his breast with his hook, "and I'll clear myself of all them suspicions."

"Take your own time, celebrated indivi-

dual," observed Jacob Giles, "and recollect that undue haste often leads to dull delay."

"A very good check for a fast man that is, Richard Crump," returned the old Peninsular, chidingly. "I should advise you to mix them words, Sir, with your tobacco, and smoke 'em gently. Howsomdever," continued he, "I'll make short work of my story, for although it may take longer than the knife-grinder who had none to tell, it won't tire ye from its length."

"We shall be the best judges of that," remarked the Corporal. "Make ready, present, and let drive at 'em!"

"I'd rather be shot out an' out," began Bill Stumpit, "or hanged, if it must come to the worst, than be in water just hot enough to keep one's feelings always in a state of slow simmer. It's dreadful, comrade," continued he, turning to Jacob, "to be eternally stewing. I know what a

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... of the ... besides chopping and ...
... of my ... with my ...
... up to the day of ...
... a ...

... an entire ...
... of ...

"From the moment," explained the old ...
... up my charge—the ...
... you ordered me to ...
... the ... of my only eye—to ...
... who came for ...
... I say, from that ...
... I've been in the ...
... fire. It wasn't to ...
... and after deliberating ...
... myself in the ...
... I ...
... to surrender ...
... Here I am," ...
... Bill Stampik, extending his back and ...
... "ready to be shot, hanged, trans-

ported, or flogged, according to the judgment of this right honorable court."

"What does the old figger head mean?" remarked Corporal Crump. "I still think we shall want that waistcoat, Jacob."

"Ought not I to have held out as long as I could, fortified as we were," rejoined the old Peninsular, "with bastions and breastworks?"

"What, stood a siege?" said the Corporal.

"Ay," returned Bill Stumpit, "wasn't that my dooty?"

"Not as the surrender was desired," replied Corporal Crump, "by the garrison itself."

"And that's the judgment of this right honorable court?" exclaimed the old Peninsular. "Hoo-ray! I haven't made a forced march of a hundred miles for nothing."

"Refresh yourself, hero," urged Jacob

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Giles, "by a further supply of brandy-and-water,"

"May good fortune attend the liberal!" returned Bill Stumpit, refilling his glass. "And now," continued he, "you've got the foundation of the business which brought me so far, I'll go on until we come to the roofing the matter in. Being as restless as a parch-pea on a drum head, I made up my mind, with quick's the word, and sharp's the movement, to see a little bit more of the world before leaving it; and plucking myself out by the roots from Paradise, I started to find a new home among"—Bill Stumpit paused with dramatic effect before giving the tag—"old friends."

"And you need not stir an inch, hero," replied Jacob, "for here it is beyond all doubt or question. I can't exactly take my rank among your old friends at present; but if you'll stay long enough with me, it

shall go hard but I'll try to mellow into one."

"Never say no to a good offer, Bill," rejoined the Corporal. "It's one which I can answer for, that may be set down, at a long figure, in the shape of a heavy premium."

"Halt for a moment," returned the old Peninsular. "I'm not a likely son of a woman to kick myself out of a feather bed, Dicky, as you know full well from a long acquaintanceship; but let me put the thatch on what I've got to say."

"Hear, hear," cried Jacob Giles. "A clear stage and a fair hearing is an Englishman's birthright. Proceed, hero of a hundred fights."

"I've kept the tit bit, like a child with a jam tart," continued the old Peninsular; "but the truth is, Dicky, that I dreamt so much of the Mrs. Corporal that is to be, that at last she sat upon my buzzim, as soon

as I got to sleep, and such was the weight of the nightmare, that hang me if I didn't begin to get as flat as a pancake."

"Mrs. Corporal sitting on your bosom, Full Stumpit!" ejaculated the veteran, with an expression amounting almost to serious displeasure. "How came you to dream such a thing as that, Sir?"

"You wouldn't call the hero to account for dreaming, would ye?" returned Jacob.

"Not as a rule, perhaps," replied Corporal Crump; "but a soldier's honor," continued he, with a martial frown, "is easily touched."

"Well!" exclaimed the old Peninsular, scratching the top of his polished head with his iron hook, "right or wrong there she squatted, Dicky, and to shake her off was beyond *my* strength. Being a weight more than I could bear constantly, I thought it better to try what a change of quarters might do, and this was another and last

reason for turning my back on Paradise Lodge."

"Mistress Twigg, hero," observed the little general shopkeeper, "is a magnificent specimen of a female, and so you'll say when you see her."

"I'd a great mind to pay her a visit before coming here," rejoined Bill Stumpit; "but seeing your name over the shop front, licensed dealer in coffee, tea, tobacco, and snuff, and finding the door ajar, I couldn't pass it."

"You want to see Charlotte, do ye?" said the Corporal, with his brow now clear from the martial frown.

"I do, Dicky," replied the old Peninsular, "and shall look upon her as worth the distance of coming to inspect on my bit of British oak."

"Then limber up," replied Corporal Crump, "we'll pass our evening in the bar-parlour of the Harrow and Pitchfork."

CHAPTER XIV.

LEONARD was away, perhaps on a mission to Miss Baxter, and the solitary occupier of the large and gloomy room in which she sat was Alice Woodbee. Her features, blanched and delicate, were fixed with an expression of the deepest sorrow, and her heart seemed charged to overflowing with unutterable grief.

Alone, and in secret, she mourned for her who was now the tenant of the tomb.

Dark, heavy curtains were drawn before the French windows, opening upon an

Elizabethan flower garden, where Alice had passed many an hour in days gone by; but between the folds of the drapery, opposite the casement, and commanding the closest view of her, the indistinct outline of a man's face was visible, closely pressed against the glass.

Long as it continued to be there, she did not perceive that she was under the scrutinizing gaze of any one, and the harsh creak of the fastening of the window, as it was gently turned by a careful hand, failed to attract her attention.

The current of air, however, sweeping into the room nearly extinguished the lamp, which stood upon the table between the window and Alice, and for a few moments screened the intruder's approach.

"Who is there?" cried she, starting from her chair.

The flickering flame, after flaring in the

wind, became steady again, and there stood Doctor Starkie with the parenthesis as of yore.

“Be not alarmed, my good Madam,” said the Oxford double-first prize-man in as silky a voice as ever man spoke. “Be not alarmed,” repeated he. “It is only I, your humble and, he feign would hope, unoffending servant,” and Doctor Starkie bowed as became a courtier and a gentleman.

“Are you aware, Sir, that this is a rude and unwarrantable encroachment upon my privacy?” rejoined Alice, with dignity.

“Pardon me I beseech you,” returned the Doctor, placing his hands together; “but it is long since we have met, and moments like these are too precious to be lost.”

“I do not understand you, Sir,” said Alice as she stood regarding him with feelings of inexpressible dread.

“Do not speak to me thus,” replied

Doctor Starkie in the same supplicating tone. "I would not offend you for the hope of heaven."

"I can hold no communication with you, Sir, and must beg that you will leave this room immediately."

Her eyes flashed with indignation as she spoke, but he quailed not under them.

"Forgive me if I hesitate to obey your mandate," he returned, drawing himself up to his full height, and bending his gaze upon her with a rude and steady stare. "I came not here to be dismissed."

Alice's bosom heaved convulsively, and her upper lip curled with contempt as she moved in silence towards the door.

In a moment one of her hands was in his, and the firm grasp caused an involuntary exclamation of pain.

"Stay," said he, in a voice hoarse with emotion, "we part not so."

"Unhand me," cried Alice, trying to wrench herself from his hold. "Unhand me!" repeated she, raising her voice.

"There is no one within hearing," coolly returned Doctor Starkie, "or I should not have chosen this hour for seeking you."

"And what would you with me, Sir?" ejaculated she.

"Be patient," replied the Oxford double-first prize-man, placing himself between the door and Alice, "and you shall hear."

He released her hand now.

"I suspect," resumed he, while his features became deeply lined, "that we do not understand each other. Why have you avoided me of late?"

"Because your presence is hateful to me," was the answer.

"Indeed!" he rejoined.

"Because," she continued, "I knew that your cold, calculating, cruel heart assumed

a virtue which it never had, and could never feel, and, wicked in itself, would remain so."

"Indeed!" again rejoined Doctor Starkie, and his face betokened passions difficult to suppress.

"You thought to play again the demon's part," said Alice, with eyes that spoke of a spirit roused to little short of frenzy. "Discovering that your devilish end," continued she, "was not to be gained by —"

"Stay, stay," interrupted he, in a husky tone. "Put no construction upon my actions. If you know the object of them, so do I."

"To your infamy be it spoken."

"Perhaps so," returned the Doctor; "but we will not discuss so unimportant a point. May I ask if your husband was made sensible of this display of virtuous indignation?" added he, with a sneer.

"The disclosure of your perfidy —"

“Produced an unexpected effect,” interrupted he. “Exactly so. Paralysis is not unfrequently the result of a sudden disarrangement of the nervous system,” and Doctor Starkie, although white as the ceiling above him, spoke as calmly as if an ordinary topic was engaging his attention.

“And now, Sir, let me pass,” said Alice.

“One moment more,” replied he. “I need not ask whether you were believed;—that is evident in what followed. But as none but the mad act without motives—and I question whether even they do so without real or imaginary ones—what might have been yours in keeping me in ignorance of this confession to your husband? You could not wish that we should meet again;—blood is a sickening sight in a woman’s eyes.”

“There was little fear of any being shed,” rejoined she, with a proud demeanour

he had never seen before. "Putting the heel upon a worm crushes the insect; but it provokes no feelings of murder."

The Oxford double-first prize-man's teeth grated, and his eyes darted forth a light as if his brain was on fire.

"But why should I render any explanation to you?" said Alice. "Have I anything to hope from you—anything to fear? If I told you nothing, it was simply my contempt that kept me silent."

Doctor Starkie was not prepared for this, and he shrank within himself.

"He," she continued, pointing in the direction of the sick man's chamber, "was your dupe, and dismissal from his service might have come, perhaps, from him with a serviceable lesson. At least so I thought, and my fervent hope was—if it had pleased Heaven to restore his health—that we might never exchange another word."

"My own weapons turned against myself, eh?" rejoined the Doctor, with a laugh expressive of the minutest measure of merriment. "A woman for plotting against the devil; but I'll not be beaten if the gibbet is my doom!" and thus speaking, he seized her by her arms and pinioned them to her side.

A wild, loud shriek rang piercingly through the house.

"Peace," hissed he; and his hot breath steamed upon her cheek, "or I'll dash you to my foot."

"Mercy," exclaimed Alice, "have mercy upon me!" and she thrust herself back as if from the deadly fangs of a serpent.

But in spite of her strong struggles he held her to his breast, fast locked, and clutched in the gripe of one terribly resolved.

"What shall save you, now?" cried he in triumph; but scarcely was the last word

upon his lip when a figure—as if newly raised from the dead—stood before him.

Doctor Starkie's arms dropped, and in a moment he was stricken to the ground by a blow which might have felled an ox.

CHAPTER XV.

AMONG the great gifts and innate self-possession of that old soldier, Corporal Crump, was the facility of his not only rendering himself at home upon all the ordinary occasions of life, but to speak in a figurative sense, he possessed a corresponding ease of taking in a lodger.

With a full-length pipe in his mouth, the bit of British oak resting on a neighbouring chair, his hook and arm crossed upon that breast which had braved the battle and the breeze of consecutive campaigns and seasons,

the three-cornered felt hat placed with a jaunty air over the snuffed-out optic, and a bright, sparkling, diamond surface in the one remaining, Bill Stumpit looked as much at ease as if the possession of the bar-parlour of the Harrow and Pitchfork belonged to him by legal and indisputable right.

Mistress Twigg either expected company or she did not—that was a fact, great or little, locked within the casket of her secrets—but no one, of the most sceptical turn of mind, could doubt that she was got up on the present occasion with more than care, and a total disregard of expense.

Never did Mistress Twigg appear to greater advantage than on the evening of the old Peninsular's introduction to the Harrow and Pitchfork. Her cap was of the newest fashion, and the ribands of the brightest hue. The richness of her dress declared itself in the rustle of its stiff and liberal widths, and

the kerchief, folded with scrupulous care across her extensive bosom, had more delicate flowers, fruit, leaves, figures of fantastic shapes, curves, angles, and tangents, worked in, around, and about it, than fell to the share of a common piece of muslin. In addition to this splendour, Mistress Twigg wore, by way of ornament more than utility, a gigantic watch by her side, to the chain of which so large a collection of seals, keys, rings, and cornelian hearts, was attached, that it seemed to be the gathering of many generations.

As may easily be supposed, the old Peninsular was perfectly dazzled with the effect produced by the bride expectant, and he remained, in the position already described, with his solitary eye fixed upon her in mute admiration.

Corporal Crump never felt prouder, or perhaps so proud of his Charlotte, as he did

on the present occasion, and was far from being an indifferent observer of the great hit she had made on the sensibilities of what remained of Bill Stumpit.

It will be better to pass over, with as short an annotation as possible, the state of the feelings of Jacob Giles, as he sat in the remotest corner of the bar-parlour slowly eating a thumb-nail. If prone to the envy of another, he did his best to keep them down.

“I have always been from my youth upwards,” observed Mistress Twigg, without raising her eyes from her knitting needles, which she was plying with the spirit of industry, “a great admirer of the military, and I can say, without the smallest intention to flatter, that of the many gallant spirits I may have wished to have seen, from hearing and reading of their noble deeds of glory, there is not one—” Charlotte coughed as if on

the eve of committing a small error—"or *but one*," continued she, bestowing upon the corporal a look of no ordinary tenderness, "that I desired to make his personal acquaintance so much as yours, Peninsular."

The old Peninsular, as in duty bound—for a fairer compliment could scarcely be paid to merit—took off the three-cornered felt hat, and, raising his hook to his brow, saluted the widow as became a soldier.

Just at this critical moment the calls of business demanded the presence of Mistress Twigg at the bar.

Upon her departure, Bill Stumpit took the full-length pipe from his lips, and pushing his bit of British oak most unexpectedly forwards, caught Corporal Crump in about the middle of his abdomen, and delivered a monosyllable, or sound, which can only be described in something of the form of Welch orthography, "Klck!"

The corporal emitted a short expression of uneasy surprise, and covered the quarter attacked with the palms of both hands.

“What’s the old figure-head about now, I should like to know?” said he, with an effort to knit his brows and look serious; but it proved an eminent failure.

“What have *you* been about, Dicky,” replied the old Peninsular, in a whisper, and threatening to renew the attack, “to deserve such a prize as that?” and he pointed over his shoulder in the direction which the widow had taken.

“She’s a fine woman,” observed the little general shopkeeper, in a confidential tone, and he struggled to prevent the rise of some effervescing jealousy, “a remarkable fine woman.”

“A field-marshal of a woman!” returned Bill Stumpit. “She’s what *I* should call a

THE WIND OF THE WILLOW

"The wind of the willow" is a name for the wind that blows from the willow trees.

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“That’s the spirit of a true-born Englishman!” returned Jacob Giles, rousing himself from the dull occupation of rubbing his thumb-nail.

“To be sure it is,” said the Corporal, “and so long as such a spirit can be found, there will always be a very queer breed to beat. Bonaparte was right enough when he said Englishmen never seemed to know when they were beaten; but he might have added, because they don’t understand what it is. Repulsed they have been, and will again, but beaten—never.”

“We’ve seen ’em stand like a wall of fire, before now, haven’t we, Dicky?” remarked the old Peninsular, “with the round, grape, and canister ploughing ’em up by whole battalions; but as one man was knocked over, or fifty, their places were taken as soon as vacant.”

“And whether in war or peace,” replied

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

[illegible]

"He takes me a week," observed Jacob
 "I shall have to wait for a week
 as a minimum."

"I am not surprised, then, that he took the least-suspected captive?" said Bill Starnes.

- But in the smallest particular," replied the little general shopkeeper; - and she's as worthy a prize as the captain is of winning her."

"I'm sincerely spoken," rejoined the Corporal. "Good, your health," and he lifted

a flagon of the widow's own to his lips, and pledged the toast in a draught which, from its depth, proved that he was no stranger to the mixture.

"As you say, Dicky," returned the old Peninsular, "there's no foretelling what a man's end may be. Only think of your coming to be a licensed victualler ; there's promotion !"

"But it's easy to see what a cur's end will be; Bill Stumpit," added Corporal Crump. "A man can die bnt once," continued he, "and that he knows and feels, and if he has done his duty to the best of his powers and ability, he looks at death with a calm eye, but not callous heart. If from prosperity he has fallen into the worst of all earthly ills, the hard gripe of poverty, and so lost his best and dearest friends, those who once hung upon his breath, he will not burn with revenge or

to call in a special prophet to foretel the way in which *he'll* wind up the thread of life. At the early glimpse of the enemy—I don't care in what shape it comes—his first thought will be to run away, or sit down and weep. A nearer approach makes him either bolt or faint, and after that he thinks of drowning or hanging himself. Provided he should not carry out one of these doglike modes of ending his fears, he shoves his head into the slough of despair, and then the public walks over the cur who buried himself in the mud. And that's the style of *his* finish."

Mistress Twigg here made her re-appearance, and intimated that James Burly would form an addition to the society in the bar-parlour, provided it was agreeable to all parties.

It being unanimously agreed that nothing could be more pleasant to the respective

feelings of every one present, the knight of the muscles came forward, and with a countenance expressive of something more than usual being uppermost in his brain, rather startled the collective body by exclaiming in a strong, healthy tone, "Thank Heaven!"

"By all means," responded Corporal Crump.

"I say, widder, and gentlemen generally," returned Burly James, making a bow of ceremony, "thank Heaven!"

"I see," observed Mistress Twigg; "I can see through Mr. Burly at all times, and if he hasn't a peculiar reason for that thanksgiving at this moment, an extensive deception has been practised upon me."

"The widder's right," rejoined he, "I have a motive for my prayers, and always had, but never a more particular one than now. Gentlemen," continued James Burly, making a short examination of the physiog-

mony of each one present, "widder included, thank Him from whom all blessin's flow!"

"I thought so," returned the hostess, "I expected as much; but we must not hurry Mr. Burly," continued she, shaking her head. "He requires time to bring forth anything, like my remarkable Polish hen, that lays a diurnal egg throughout the year."

"Right again," exclaimed the knight of the muscles. "The widder's right again, gentlemen. I'm not a meteor; but let me have a few moments for my i-deas to soak, and, if slow, you'll find 'em remarkably sure."

"Take a chair, Sir," said the old Peninsular, removing his bit of British oak from that which it occupied and pushing it towards Burly James.

"Thanks be to you, veteran; for I see

you're that," replied James Burly, "although a stranger. A man's i-deas I think," continued he, dropping himself into a seat by the side of Bill Stumpit, "flow better when sitting than standing."

The hostess of the Harrow and Pitchfork raised a finger as if to enjoin a strict silence, for there was a presentiment in her mind that the knight of the muscles was the bearer of more than common intelligence.

"As a stranger," said he, addressing the old Peninsular, and offering the developed biceps of his formidable right arm, "do me the kindness to feel o' that."

Bill Stumpit acceded to the request through the agency of his hook, and, signifying his opinion that iron was not harder, Burly James assumed a look of combined pride and enlarged satisfaction.

Mistress Twigg again lifted the finger, and glancing down the sides of her nose,

with her head at an angle to produce the elevation of the chin, appeared to silently order James Burly to keep her no longer in suspense.

“I’m gettin’ ripe, widder,” said he, perceiving that greater delay might produce a more decided expression of impatience, “and shall drop presently like a meller pear. Who do you think’s an outside passenger by his Majesty’s four-oss mail to night?”

To consume time in guessing would be ridiculous, and therefore Mistress Twigg begged that Mr. Burly would waive the necessity of an answer.

“The bookman,” cried he in an excited state, “Master Leonard’s nateral-born tormentor.”

“What, Doctor —”

“The same, widder,” interrupted the knight of the muscles, “and with a mark

upon his knob likely to last between now and Christmas. I've seen many a swellin,' but that was a swelliner!"

"Wounded by accident or intention?" inquired the Corporal.

"I should say," replied James Burly, "that a better intention was never brought into force by a scientific upper cut."

"Pray cease wandering from the point," observed Mistress Twigg with an approach to vehemence. "You have got it now; pray stick to it."

Mr. Burly felt that the correction was not altogether unmerited.

"I will, widder," responded he; "I'll hammer away at it in a way that shall please the public, and so here goes. About an hour after dark this evening, we servants were havin' a little amusin' talk in the servants' hall about everybody's business, our own included, when such a screech as

sounded dreadful to our ears, made us fly like so many rabbits in a warren when a double-barrel is pulled at 'em behind a hedge close by. Some scoured one way, some another; but I went straight to where the screech was still keepin' it up as strong as ever. Missis's door of what's called her private room was open; in I went without knockin', and there a sight met my eyes which I shan't forget in a hurry."

All his hearers appeared to be interested in the relation, but both Mistress Twigg and Jacob were breathless with the intensity of their emotions.

"I say," continued Mr. Burly, looking singly at each individual composing the circle, "that a sight met my eyes which I shan't forget in a hurry. There stood master, just as he got out of bed—I don't enter into particulars from feelings of delicacy to the female sex," and he touched his

forward with a respectful gesture towards the position occupied by the hostess—"but there he stood with as few clothes on as he well could have, whiter than chalk, and his eyes—oh, my eyes, what eyes!" and the knight of the muscles threw his own to the ceiling above him as the reminiscence of the expression presented itself.

"In his hand, I forget which," resumed he, "he held a poker bent almost double, and at his feet—I needn't say on the floor—laid Doctor Starkie stretched as stiff as a maggot."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Mistress Twigg.

"A rosy stream," said Burly James, "poured down his nose, and he looked, altogether, knocked out o' time."

"Not killed?" ejaculated Jacob, worked to the highest pitch which curiosity could attain.

"Wait-a-bit," replied James Burly, "and

you shall hear every partickler. On a chair, with her hair hanging down her back, sat my poor missis, a-giving tongue as only a woman can when she's hurt or frightened. She laughed, and cried, and hollared all at once, and seemed to me to have gone clean, stark crazy.

“I'm not a meteor, as I said before, and for a few seconds my i-deas felt to want a little soakin'. I could do nothin' more than stare as if my eyes were stuck open with skewers.

“ ‘Take either him or me away,’ said my master, in a nasty kind of voice, and pointing to the body of the bookman with the poker, ‘or I shall add murder to my sins,’ and with this he gave a kind of reel, and would have dropped had I not caught him.

“It was but a feather weight—for of all the shrunk-into-nothings I ever saw, master's the most so—and whipping him up across

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my shoulders, I carried him off to the room where he came from, and dropped him lightly on the bed.

“Missis follered, how I don’t know, but there she was, and, as luck would have it, ’pothecary Grimes dropped in at the very nick of that very moment, and no sooner put his eyes upon master’s face, and a hand upon his heart, than, without speaking a word, he stuck a lancet into both his arms.

“I now thought of the bookman, and runnin’ back to where we left him, I found that individooal crawled under the table, surrounded by my fellow-servants.

“ ‘How are ye, Sir?’ said I, droppin’ on my knees to have a squint at him.

“Bookman groaned.

“ ‘Can I assist ye, Sir?’

“Bookman groaned worse than ever.

“ ‘Are you hurt, Sir?’

“ ‘ Hurt,’ replied he, so that I could just hear what he said, ‘ I’m brained.’

“ ‘ Better come out, Sir, and let’s see what’s best to be done.’

“ ‘ Where’s that—that madman?’ said he.

“ ‘ In bed, without sense or motion.’

“ ‘ You’re sure o’ that?’

“ ‘ As I’m a wicked sinner, but not a miserable one, Sir,’ said I.

“ ‘ Then let every one go but you, Burly.’

“ Being left to ourselves, out bookman crept, and a pretty picture he looked, take my word for it. Whether most frightened or hurt I can’t tell; but such a mawled cocoa-nut I haven’t seen for many a day.

“ Gettin’ some water, I sponged him up a little fresh, and then asked how it came to happen that he caught such an ugly wipe.

“ ‘ The madman rushed in,’ said he, ‘ and cut me down in an instant.’

"A sort of fit came over him. I suppose, Sir?"

"Yes, Burly, but such a fit that I won't run the risk of meetin' with a second one. The mail will pass the end of the drive in about half an hour?"

"That's the time, Sir," replied I.

"Then go with me to my room," said bookman, "for I won't be left alone while here. I'll quit this place for ever, and that too, immediately."

"Faint and weak as he was, his movements could scarcely be quicker, and some time before Jonathan toolled up to the lodge gate, there were we, luggage and all, a-waitin' to be taken up. Givin' me his blessin' for my trouble, bookman climbed into the box-seat, and that's the last, I expect, that I shall see of him in this world, and," continued Burly James with unquestionable sincerity, "I shan't grieve

if we don't meet in the next, gentlemen, widder included, thank Heaven!"

"Really," exclaimed Mistress Twigg, at the conclusion of the knight of the muscles' narrative, "I never heard of a more thrilling coincidence in the whole course of my life."

"I began to think the unfortunate man was slain," observed Jacob, in a state which can only be described as reeking from excitement.

"It would not have proved a casualty among the list killed, but what *I* could have borne with considerable submission," said the Corporal.

"I don't think, speaking for myself," remarked Mr. Burly, "that *my* appetite would have failed; but I'm just as well pleased that he's taken himself off without giving us the trouble of buryin' him."

"But what could have brought Mr. Woodbee, ill as he was, into that room to assault the tutor?" inquired Mistress Twigg, with her eyebrows raised far above their natural boundaries.

"I can't answer that question," replied Burly James, shaking his head, "for the bookman himself didn't seem to know. I've told you, widder, all I saw, heard, and did."

"No doubt of that," replied the hostess. "I have not the smallest doubt of that, Sir," continued she. "My customers—those of the bar-parlour—are in the constant habit of treating me with the greatest confidence; but promiscuous discussion sometimes unveils a mystery."

"You'll excuse me, widder," rejoined James Burly, "if I leave the unveilin' the mystery to your three selves then, for

after a drop o' the right sort I must be gone."

And after "the drop," in the shape of an honest quart, the knight of the muscles vanished.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN the lone, dark hours of the night, when not a sound broke upon her ear, save the low moan of him who lay paralysed by her side, Alice Woodbee kept her solitary watch. She seldom left him, but with ready hand administered to every trifling want that might mitigate his sufferings. To smooth his pillow, to cool his hot and burning brow, to moisten his parched lips, and fan the cheek which looked little less red than blood, were acts which Tobias Woodbee appeared sensible of, but unable to acknowledge, except by the thankfulness which as

often beamed in his glassy eyes as she bent over him.

They told her that probably he would live; but to what extent the nervous system might remain unhinged, it was yet impossible to say. He had not uttered a word from the time of his being borne to that bed, from which he rose to inflict the apt retribution upon his subtle enemy, and days and weeks had passed since then. Often, however, would he start as if from a confused dream of the past, and vainly trying to raise himself in the bed, the blue veins swelled upon his forehead, and clenching his teeth, he seemed to be once more an actor in that dread scene of violence.

It was then that Alice rested her cheek upon his, and bathing it with her tears, the paroxysm passed, and he fell into a dull heavy stupor, which lasted, frequently for hours.

So day succeeded night, and night the day, with little change.

The morning light began to steal through chink and crevice, and peep between curtain and blind, and dart through the lattice, and to master many a wily device to keep his bright ray out. As it glanced upon her wing, the lark shook the dew-drop from it, and the wood-pigeon flapped from the roost in the fir. Rook called to rook, and the chattering sable colony spoke, perhaps, like other families, of dreams and visions of the night "begotten of vain fantasy." From the eaves of the thatch it awoke slumbering sparrows to chirp and twitter from twig to spray, and mob the blinking owl to his home in the old oak tree.

"Alice!"

She could not be deceived; that was her husband's voice.

"Alice," repeated he, in a tone scarcely

audible from its feebleness, "I know you are by me—you are always so."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed she, "you can then speak again?"

"Yes," replied he, "and let my first words be grateful ones to her I owe so much. O Alice, Alice! how shall I ever repay you—how make amends for all your forgiving kindness?"

"Hush!" she rejoined, stooping over him, and pressing a kiss upon his brow, "not another syllable of that. We'll speak of other things: of strength, of health, of happier days."

"Draw back the curtains," returned he, "and throw the casement open, Alice. I wish to see the sunshine once again, and feel the fresh air play upon my face."

"Dare I do so?"

"Yes, yes; I'm sure it will not hurt me."

THE HILL OF THE VILLAGE.

Consistently to his desire, with somewhat a reluctant heart. Alice withdrew the heavy canopy hanging round the bed, and throwing open the window, the breeze swept into the sick room a fresh fragrance with the breath of flowers which it had picked on its way.

"Is this and looks like heaven, Alice," said he, "and time, to me, never came on so soft a pinion as the present. Where is Leonard?"

"He is and sleeping, I trust."

"He will never shine in the senate, Alice," added the invalid, with a faint smile playing upon his rapt features; "but he shall teach me how to employ my future hours to make amends for the past. You will assist him, Alice, will you not?"

Ay, that she would, and she answered by her tears, which stole in silence down her cheeks.

"There is much to do, if each be well

employed to the last allotted of my life," continued he; "for time misspent, how is it to be recalled? I know all now, Alice. I know what my blind selfishness, my over-reaching pride, and empty vanity would have clutched;—the shadow of happiness but not its substance. It has been said, that if we could see ourselves as others see us, how differently should we esteem ourselves. I think, Alice, that that mirror, in which my reflection may have been viewed by all, save myself, is now held up to me. It is terrible to look upon—a distorted, frightful picture; but one that I will gaze on daily, so long as life remains."

His voice became stronger as he spoke, and a crimson flush spread over his countenance. "One word, and but one," continued he, with a strangely altered tone, "of him we'll never name again. Where is he,

or what because of the—” but the intensity of the feeling checked the sentence.

“I know what you would say,” returned Alice hastily. — Be contented by learning all that I know, or is known of him, in the simple words:—he is gone.”

Thomas Wacher breathed hard for a few moments, and his lips were compressed together: but he said nothing in reply.

“Tell me more—” but his eyes rested at this moment upon the black dress of his wife, and again he could say no more.

There was a pause, and her fast-falling tears told him what he would have asked.

“Chris is an orphan?”

Alice: it was too true.

“To us then she shall be as our own,” continued he. — Is she here?”

“No,” returned Alice. — Yielding to Miss Baxter’s entreaty I assented to her remain-

ing at her house until your wishes were learned respecting her."

"Let both be sent for this morning," said Tobias Woodbee. "I have much to say to them, and to Miss Baxter especially. Had I, Alice, listened to her,—had I turned a willing ear to the warning she once gave me, how much suffering might have been saved to all! But that is too late, too late to think of now. Let me rather employ my time for future good, than vainly regretting what can never be repaired."

The delicate and tender green of the beech, the ash with its young silken leaves, and the yellow and crimson tints of the oak, proclaimed that it was that season of the year when spring is just merging into summer. The stichwort, and lychness, and the anemone, were in bloom, and beautiful

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beckoned for his wife to stoop towards him.

“Leonard will never shine in the senate, Alice,” whispered he; and with the same smile with which he before made the observation; “but if not great, I think he will be happy,” and, thus speaking, he raised a hand and pointed significantly to Clara.

“We will hope so,” she replied, and there was a joyousness in the tone leaving little doubt that the hope was well founded.

CHAPTER XVII.

DOCTOR GRIMES had taken the nicest care to insure himself against one of those visitations popularly known as the discourse Caudle, and in the conscientious belief that every art had been used to allay the chronic irritability of his stiff-backed, stiff-tempered, but pliant-tongued partner, he jumped into bed, and, to perpetrate a jingling of words, covered up his head.

Mrs. Doctor's purpose, however, was not to be frustrated by such an impotent manœuvre, and it somewhat tended to apply

a spark to the train of her fiery indignation that such a consummate piece of transparent evasion should be attempted upon her.

“ Mr. Grimes,” cried she in the shrill, piping tone of exasperated virtue, “ am I to believe my senses, or do I labor under some profound and mysterious hallucination?”

“ I am not aware, Margaret —”

“ You never are, Sir,” interrupted she. “ By some unaccountable but rigid rule by which your domestic conduct is governed, you never *are* aware of those onerous duties which befit the character of the husband.”

“ My dear Margaret —”

“ Those terms of assumed affection, Sir, are disagreeable to me, and, consequently, by no means pleasant. You will be kind enough—to oblige *me*,” said Mrs. Doctor,

with emphasis, "to make a decided alteration in them with as little consumption of time as possible."

The apothecary's nose was, by this time, well clear of the bed clothes, and he forthwith called in aid all that stock of resignation which he, providentially, kept on hand for instant use, or as the emergency might demand.

"I thought, Margaret —"

"Oh bother!" ejaculated Mrs. Doctor, "I hate people to think. Thought possesses no pleasure to me, Sir."

The apothecary would have sighed, but deeming it a more judicious course to suppress the effect of a discontented spirit, he strangled the sound in its birth, and put this question in strict confidence, as he believed, to himself. What can be the crime that I have committed to be thus soused head over ears in purgatory?

“What’s that your’e mumbling?” asked Mrs. Doctor.

“Margaret,” replied the apothecary with a deferential tone, “I am not mumbling.”

“Then we are at issue, Sir, that’s all,” rejoined she, with a copious infusion of acidulæ. “There is now an affirmative and negative on our respective sides of the bed. I say that you are or were mumbling—which if the tenses be different, the sense is the same—you as positively affirm—and I dare say are ready to swear either on the Old or New Testament—that you are or were not. The case is clear,” argued Mrs. Doctor, “that I am either right or I’m wrong, and such may be received, by way of supposition, that you hold similar grounds. Now —”

“To settle the unhappy difference between us, Margaret,” added the apothecary, driven to despair, “I—I admit that I *was* mumbling.”

Mrs. Doctor laughed like a dramatic fiend, dressed in scarlet tights, surrounded by a liberal display of blue fire, and descending into that abyss where the stage carpenters attend to break his fall with the windlass, and share the friendly pot of Barclay's unadulterated.

“Ho, ho, ho, Mr. Grimes! And so you tried to get the better of me, did you, Sir, by volunteering an untruth? Upon my word, things have come to a pretty pass! I entertained the slight vision of a remote hope that, remembering the respectability of your connections, on the side of *my* family at least, you would hesitate before running the imminent risk—but just retribution—of blistering your tongue. But no,” continued Mrs. Doctor, shaking her head, as he conjectured from the action of the bolster, “when the mind becomes hardened, all such beacons are extinguished.”

“ In admitting an error—”

“ Pooh, pooh! No nonsense of that sort will do for me, Sir. Error indeed! Things now-a-days are never called by their proper names. It's the fashion I believe; but one which I don't think proper to have observed in my presence.”

“ If I may not be permitted to extenuate my fault —”

“ Certainly not,” again interrupted Mrs. Doctor. “ In such a clear, unshackled instance of open and confessed dereliction of the commonest of duties, there can be no extenuation.”

“ Margaret, will you listen to me?” pleaded the apothecary.

“ Under the circumstances,” replied his stiff partner, “ I much doubt whether I ought. But pro-ceed, Sir, pro-ceed.”

“ May I hope—”

“ Decidedly not; let that at once be

nipped in the bud. How can any one, guilty of such gross impropriety, be allowed to hope? ”

“ But, Margaret—”

“ Don’t be ridiculous, Mr. Grimes, pray don’t. Whatever you may have got to say, say in as few words as possible. I’m not in a humour for long introductions.”

“ I was going to say—”

“ Then say at once, and do not be always going, Sir,” snapped Mrs. Doctor.

“ If there is anything—”

“ Of course there is.”

“ If there is anything—”

“ You said that before.”

“ Anything—”

“ Go on, get over anything.”

“ Which I can say or do,” continued the apothecary, “ to put an end to this unhappy difference, Margaret, believe me that I am not only most ready to conform to

your wishes, but more, much more than willing."

"Really, Mr. Grimes!" returned the stiff partner, "how very obliging!" and the sharp-set sneer was as distinct as the strongest sneeze of the finest specimen of the feline race.

"Whatever I may have done, or not done," resumed the apothecary, meek as any dove; "whatever said, or left unsaid, make me but familiar with my fault, and the cause for censure shall disappear."

"What a model of a husband!" said Mrs. Doctor. "I suppose, Sir, that you now set yourself up for a *model* of a husband, do you not?"

"No, Margaret," replied he, in a melancholy strain. "In respect to that I fall far short of the standard measure; but willing as I am to acknowledge and confess—"

"When found out! when the proof is so

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clear that the nose on one's face is not more self-evident, the greatest criminals are certain to confer upon society the kindness to admit that which they know it is impossible, or useless, to deny. The depth of the cunning of incorrigible malefactors is beyond belief!" said Mrs. Doctor.

When roughly handled, even the mouse has been known to bite, the sparrow to peck, and the worm to wriggle.

The spirit of the British lion, at length, was roused. His professional reputation scoffed at; his love of books and abstruse studies, when he walked the hospitals, ridiculed; his proffered terms, at any sacrifice, for peace, rejected; his sleep systematically broken; his peace of mind undermined; his dignity as a man—a respectable ratepayer—bespattered with the malevolence of slander.

Matters could not be worse, and with a quick and firm resolve he determined to

make a bold attempt to improve their condition.

The apothecary slowly raised himself in bed, and assumed a sitting posture.

“Unless you wish me to lose all patience,” observed Mrs. Doctor, “you’ll instantly re-occupy the parallel with me, Sir, which you have thought proper to quit in opposition to my desire, and greatly to my inconvenience.”

“Mrs. Grimes,” said the apothecary; and the tone possessed the same chilling effect upon her as if a jug of freshly-pumped water had been suddenly poured down the centre of her back, “Mrs. Grimes,” repeated he, “I’ll see you d—d first.”

Had a small barrel of gunpowder exploded under the bed, or a galvanic battery been applied to the soles of Mrs. Doctor’s feet, she could scarcely have been expected to

have vaulted higher as the result of a most decided sensation.

"What do I hear?" gasped she, with staring eye-balls. "What do I hear?"

"That I'll no longer submit to be snubbed," replied the apothecary, "and unless you conduct yourself, Madam, with becoming propriety to me, I'll embrace the opportunity, while you're in bed, of kicking you out."

"Robert Grimes, are you mad?"

"No, Madam, nor will I be driven mad by being robbed of my sleep, plundered of my professional reputation, and otherwise loaded with the manacles of matrimonial slavery. No, henceforth I'll be free—free as air—master of my house—lord of my bed."

Mrs. Doctor began to think it advisable to try an experiment in the hysterics, and accordingly began to laugh, cry, and kick

with vigour; but the apothecary was not to be deceived by a flam on his professional acquirements.

“ Unless you cease these boisterous proceedings, Mrs. Grimes,” said he, with a sternness of demeanor which he himself was unconscious of possessing, until then, the capacity to adopt, “ I shall try what a little basting will do.”

“ What ?” ejaculated Mrs. Doctor, making a full stop in the general round of hysterics.

“ I’ll try,” returned the apothecary, in a cold and calculating manner, as he seized his pillow by a convenient corner, and shook the feathers to the further end, “ I’ll try what a little basting will do.”

“ Robert Grimes !” and the stiff partner fused into a liquid state of tears, “ you’re a brute.”

“ I may be, Margaret,” rejoined he, with a

said Mrs. Doctor, persuasively, "I was your own tiddy-widdy Margery at one time, you know."

"And might have been still my tiddy-widdy," replied the apothecary. "Hostilities were never begun by me. In every instance that I can recal to my memory, have I given way to the unmerited attacks upon my peace; until driven to the verge of desperation I made a stand, and that stand I will maintain."

"An unhappy difference shall not take place between us again," rejoined she. "Resume your position, Robert, by the side of the wife of your bosom."

The invitation, perhaps, was irresistible; for the apothecary glided down between the sheets, impressed with the gratifying assurance of having achieved no doubtful victory.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GRUNDY'S Green presented an unusual spectacle, one to which no stranger could possibly have been indifferent. The villagers were 'dressed all in their best,' and from the furbished exterior everybody wore, it was obvious that some extraordinary event of rare importance, or interest, was on the extreme point of coming off.

Undulated by a southerly wind, and its lustrous colors shining brightly under a cloudless sky, a large red flag swept grace-

tully from the time-honored sign of the Harrow and Pitchfork, and, early as the hour was, a full band of music, consisting of a drum, a clarionet, and a fiddle, played with considerable spirit before the portal.

The selection of the airs appeared to have been made with a view of gratifying an exclusive taste, for they had reference to one point, and to one point only.

“If I had a beau for a soldier I’d go,” gave place to “The white cockade,” and the last bar was scarcely wound to a finish by a mighty thump on the big drum, when “There’s none so smart as my soldier laddie,” commenced with a solo on the fiddle, and blended itself with variations, into “As two little drummer boys were going along, said one to the other, Bill, tip us a song.”

Cheery was the music, cheery the players—especially Drum, who, however he might

lack melody, made up for the imperfection in the condensation of his power—and all went merrily as the peal of bells which at this moment broke upon the ear.

The poet has written "that all the world is a stage, and each man in his time plays many parts." He who has played a most insignificant one in this history of love and war, and accident of field, if not of flood, Ned the ostler, now—to apply a forensic description—entered an appearance, bearing in his hand a tray containing things of no watery kind for the solace of Drum, Clarionet, and Fiddle.

Drum looked the head and front of those proselytes of Apollo, and, therefore, Ned, with praiseworthy observance of the laws of etiquette, opened his address to the vellum-headed instrument.

“Missis told me to tell you, one and all,”

said he, "that she's amazingly obleeged for the music, which she thinks is the sweetest—them were her werry words—that she ever heerd, and she hopes this jug of egg-flip—which she made with her own blessed hands, as I can witness whereof no one can deny, or if so let him come for'ard—will mollify your in'ards."

Drum seemed fully alive to the responsibility of his office—either thrust upon him, or virtually his own by inalienable right—and, clearing his voice, thus began:

"Give our thanks—the thanks of the United and Friendly Harmonical Fraternity, as incorporated with the Madrigal and Mutual Benefit Society—to your missis, and say that we, the members of the same, drink to the health, long life, prosperity, and happiness, for the last time, of Mistress Twigg; but, with the Divine blessing, we

hope to live, and live to hope, that a few hours only will intervene before we repeat the dose under another name—the name of Crump; Mrs. Corporal Crump,” said Drum.

Both Fiddle and Clarionet signified an entire concurrence in this sentiment, and the egg-flip disappeared with a precipitate movement, to be imitated with success only by constant practice.

The serenade being ended, the members of the Friendly Harmonical Fraternity, as incorporated with the Madrigal and Mutual Benefit Society, formed in line, and, attended by a large procession of all the small children in no immediate occupation, marched through the village with a succession of gay tunes, causing the halt and the old to cut capers deftly, and babies to stare with goggle eyes, in their nurses' arms. .

Let the cynical be as churlish as they may; let the sticklers for form and fashion sneer their utmost, they shall not turn the chronicler of the full and particular account of the corporal's wedding from the bent of his carefully-weighed judgment, that it was an affair far more worthy of record than ninety and nine out of a hundred of those choice histories headed with the stereotyped title "Marriage in High Life."

There was no crush of carriages, it is true; neither can it be asserted that the lovely and youthful bride's rich dress consisted of Brussels or Honiton lace. A bishop most unquestionably received no sweet-scented, rose-tinted, delicately-expressed hope, on satin paper, that his mitred dignity would officiate in lieu of a more humble, and less remunerated, representative of the apostolic fishermen. The *déjeuner à*

THE HALL OF THE VILLAGE.

As *fourchette* received no artistic pencilling from Europe's cook—she has but one—the inimitable Soyer: neither did Gunter act as *cocher*. Champagne, hock, burgundy, *muselle*, there were none. But why particularise what there was not? Let us rather turn to a picture of greater interest.

It is not known how the frill was obtained, or by whose hands it was so intricately crimped; but on Corporal Crump presenting himself on view to the public, it stood confessed, on every side, that such a shirt front had not been seen for many a day. It certainly was a prodigious frill! The quantity of cambric cannot be stated with anything like certainty; but as it abutted from his breast it caused the speculative mind to wonder, whether it was possible that he could command a view of those highly polished pumps which were

decorated with bows of an extensive character. And then the lavender pantaloons remain among the mysteries of his toilet on this eventful occasion. For no tailor in that part of the county could claim them as having been turned from his easel, and the sky blue silk waistcoat formed a corresponding link in the complicated chain of obscurity.

Tittle-tattle, that germ of dire mischief, often "no bigger than a midge's wing" abhors a vacuum, and therefore, in the absence of a more colorable report, assigned the source, whence these attractive garments were traceable, to the well-preserved wardrobe of the late pitiable Twigg.

The postulate, however, resolved itself into an assumption of the most flimsy description, and not a particle of evidence was ever offered in support of this weak invention, probably, of the enemy.

The company has the necessary funds to be making substantial investments in a wide range of projects. It will also have a strong reputation for its performance, as it could be the only one in the world now capable of making large-scale investments in other parts of the world. It is the only one in the world now capable of making large-scale investments in other parts of the world.

Another point was that primary light cast
analogously with the brightness of bright
surfaces, and the fluorescent reaction on the left
proved just a touch in the increasing effect
which the results in comparison in power.

DETERMINED BY HIS OWN WILL on one side,
 was not however indifferent and even lavish
 was in setting himself up in his best
friendship and the old Peninsular on the
 other. General Crane commenced that
 march which would terminate at the altar of
 the sacred shrine of Grand's Green, and

where both himself and his Charlotte were to put a seal upon that compact, irrevocably joining their hands, let the condition of their hearts be what it might.

Bill Stumpit, it may be as well to observe, had made but a slight change in his exterior, consisting of the addition of a large false collar acting precisely like a pair of blinkers, between which he looked like a horse in harness.

With head erect, and shoulders back, the old Peninsular flourished his bit of British oak, and the three-cornered felt hat jerked slightly on one side—attracted a full share of public admiration.

The village was lined with an admiring throng, and nothing could exceed the enthusiasm with which the corporal and his supporters were greeted as, led by the full band which played “See the conquering hero

THESE CONCLUSIONS
WAS THAT THE
RESEARCH CONDUCTED
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abandoned the involuntary movement to its own eccentric course.

Now came the essence, the lozenge, so to speak, of the attraction which drew that motley crowd about, and around, the entrance of the Harrow and Pitchfork.

Mistress Twigg appeared.

“Holla, boys, holla!” cried Drum.

And then a cheer rose to make the welkin ring, and load the trembling air.

For a bride of a certain age, for one whose charms required no quickening, it is alleged, without fear of contradiction, that a more comely candidate for the favors of Hymen was never beheld within the confines of Grundy’s Green; no, not even by the oldest inhabitant.

Blushing like a full-blown rose, and her face illuminated with the happiest of smiles, Mistress Twigg stepped forth, and presented

1. THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 2. DO HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 3. DO HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 4. DO HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 5. DO HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THESE THINGS ARE NOT
THE ONLY THINGS THAT ARE
IN THE WORLD. THERE ARE
MANY OTHER THINGS THAT
ARE NOT IN THE WORLD.
THESE THINGS ARE NOT
THE ONLY THINGS THAT ARE
IN THE WORLD. THERE ARE
MANY OTHER THINGS THAT
ARE NOT IN THE WORLD.

SECRET

them down with a crash, Clarionet and Fiddle took up the melody, and on the body swept, to the strangely selected air of "Oh ! dear, what can the matter be, nobody's coming to marry me."

There was no accounting, however, for the vagaries of Drum after egg-flip. That everybody said.

It is needless to say that lesser stars are invariably eclipsed by those of greater magnitude, and as Mistress Twigg might now be considered a planet of the first degree, general attention was directed exclusively to her.

Opinions will differ upon most subjects, and therefore, that they were not in perfect unity upon the knotty point of the bridal array, will not appear singular. A few of the hypercritical thought the bonnet of *la affiancée* too splendid for her time of life,

and that her husband would have proved infinitely more handsome. The dress was gorgeous in the extreme, there could be no denying that, and must have cost a pretty penny. But Mistress Twigg should have remembered that a peach-blossom sister was a young sister for one who had seen the sunny side of—

Well ! no matter what : but at any rate it was better adapted for a younger bride : that they would maintain all the world over, and more, if any should be discovered.

A touch of snuff for such opinions :

Pleased with herself, proud of her military bearing, at unity with mankind—even with the lamellæ of the Spit and Chicken—and prepared to go through the ordeal with becoming serenity, Mistress Twigg arrived at the lych gate of the church, and—

But the archives, upon the payment of a small fee to the worthy functionary now in office as parish clerk, will furnish an authenticated proof of what then and there took place, between Richard Crump and Charlotte Twigg.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE members of the Rollicking Association were asked to a man. The customers and neighbours, good, moderate, and indifferent, were also included, and it is believed that such was the attention paid in issuing the invitations to all in the possession of anything like a qualification, that upon the assembling of the guests in the club-room of the Harrow and Pitchfork, when the moon was up and the stars winked, not au

exception had been made either by design or accident.

To dance at Mrs. Corporal Crump's wedding would be a notch cut deeply in the history of the past, and not to be one of that festive throng must have savoured of something far from creditable to the excluded. All were asked, however, and all came, and even Margaret, the apothecary's stiff partner, threw aside the dregs of pride and jealousy which were left at the extreme bottom of her flat bosom, and, to the astonishment of many, swept into the club-room, arm in arm with Doctor Grimes, dressed in luminous blue satin, and, with a bespangled turban, surmounting the row of mahogany curls, created a sensation of no ordinary kind.

If a slight lurking condescension was perceptible in the very grand obeisance with

26 THE BIRTH OF THE VILLAGE

When the first morning arrived Mrs. Cor-
bett, having received, giving in exchange
a small, simple, and rule con-
siderable, still more she was—no body
could say—no new things like such and a
different kind.

Lower down the hill and became very
common as it produced no winter
and the figure being
shown in a small, and "knots"
in water with thick silk stockings and a
small, and the first a powerful resem-
blance to a woman in full passage.

For a time in the morning. There they
were to witness the mysterious event, and
each, and each appear in the best of
manner to show that support which the
event demanded upon its own merits.

The first was looked a perfect galaxy of
light, and, decorated with flowers and

wreaths of evergreen, nothing could exceed the brilliancy of the entire effect, as the authoritative voice of Drum—that Drum was ever in the van — commanded the couples to take their places for a country dance.

There was no refusing Drum, and, to quicken their movements, he gave a roll which brought them into form much sooner than could be expected.

The honor of opening the ball with the bride was confided to the apothecary, who, as the full band struck up an inspiring strain, led her off with a spirit and vigour which required the whole of Mrs. Corporal Crump's physical energy to maintain.

Away went the peach blossom, down the middle and up again, and opinions were divided between the ardour and grace which attended the movement. Some awarded the

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they threw up, both evinced the most decided symptoms of great exertion. Irrespective of a decided loss of breath, Mrs. Corporal exhibited a considerable degree of moisture upon her surface, and the apothecary found it indispensable to apply a little friction to his dexter calf from a decided tendency to cramp.

It was now the bridegroom's turn to attempt a corresponding Terpsichorean display, and seizing the apothecary's stiff partner with both hands, he would have led her, perhaps, as merry a jig, had she not indicated a decided preference for the grace of attitude, rather than the agility of step.

Mrs. Doctor sailed down the middle and up again, and, after setting with much dignity to the old Peninsular and his partner, cast her eyes down the line of faces,

and appeared gratified with the impression created. It was a decided stately performance; and, as such, possessed a commendatory claim.

Corporal Crump in the support of his reputation for accomplishing everything well that he undertook, fulfilled his part as became a principal; although as a specimen of what he could do, from being clogged with the grace and dignity of Mrs. Doctor, it might be regarded as many degrees below the standard of his capacity.

Bill Stumpit's was, of course, an exhibition in which more stiffness than elegance might be witnessed; but still he flourished his bit of British oak with the greatest animation, and kept the most exact time and measure to the tune.

There were a few casualties to a collected group of senseless toes which awkwardly

stood in his path ; but these produced little interruption, and the old Peninsular concluded his laudable attempt to tread the mazy throng with well-earned and unanimous praise.

Set succeeded set, tune followed tune, and so the hours skipped nimbly by.

The bare thought would be malignant to suspect that those who came to dance at the corporal's wedding should be permitted to do so with feverish tongues, parched palates, and dried-up lips. No, perish the idea, if there be one to perish !

Fragrant as the perfume which curled from Hebe's ambrosial nectar, clouds ascended of the sweetest incense from many a yawning bowl, and magical were the attributes of these deep vessels, for it appeared impossible to drain them. At least, there they stood the test of the live-long night,

~~and it was not until 1964 that the first~~
~~book was published.~~

[illegible]

And now, after all this, Brennan's
team, and even the Supreme Court, the cycle
of events, and it was not until Brennan gave
an extraordinary statement of a passionate dispo-
sition to change the Court that there appeared
anything like a decided approach of breaking
up the majority.

As the next drop of water, however, tells the miner that he must drive his spade no deeper, so this hostile demonstration on the part of Ithaca warned the guests that

the time had arrived for their departure.

There were two, however, who resisted the general decision, and vehemently declared that not only must they decline going home till morning, and after daylight did appear; but having vowed eternal friendship, nothing could be allowed to separate them until the crack of doom.

"Permit me to say, comrade," observed Corporal Crump, addressing the knight of the muscles, who stood balancing himself through the medium of a firm hold of Bill Stumpit's iron hook, "permit me to say, comrade," repeated he, "that there is nothing eternal in this world but folly."

"The devil there isl't," Mr. Burly replied as if his mouth was full of hard peas.

"You'll excuge me, Corp'l Kwump, but feel o' that, Sir," continued he, offering an arm. "If that isl't eternal, Sir, what can be said of marble?"

"He had ye there, Dicky," added the old Peninsular, in a spluttering kind of whistle, and maintaining his perpendicular under great apparent difficulties. "It hasn't been my lot," continued he, "to hear such a reply for many a day."

"Well, well!" returned the Corporal, laughing, "may the difference of opinion never upset the cup of good will. Let me assist you, Bill."

"No, bridegroom," replied the old Peninsular with an independent wave of the hook. "I want no aux-aux-aux-ill-ll-ary aid from anybody, Sir, as you shall see," and giving a heavy lurch forwards, the bit of British oak failed to maintain the balance of weight,

and down he went on the flat of his back in one of the most helpless of postures.

“If you do that again, veteran,” said Burly James, stooping over the fallen hero, “I shall begin to think you’re getting drunk.”

“Pick me up,” responded the old Peninsular. “Upon second thoughts, Richard Crump, I’ll avail myself of your polite assistance.”

The desired help being readily given, Bill Stumpit regained his perpendicular, and, eschewing the eternal friendship which he had just sworn with the knight of the muscles, consented to be placed carefully in a wheelbarrow, and conveyed to his quarters by Ned the ostler. Jacob Giles pretended to steady the load; but it was generally believed that in steadying the load he did so to steady himself.



2. 1000-1000
1000-1000
1000-1000

CHAPTER XX.

THERE now remains little more to recount of what befel the actors in the scenes in the historical drama of the Belle of the Village.

Jacob Giles experienced the greatest consolation in the society of the old Peninsular, and it is supposed that the battles in which that hero had been engaged were

fought over and over again. For during the long winter's evenings they were known to sit for hours together in the little back settlement, and with his chin resting upon his hands, his hands through the agency of his elbows, and his elbows upon the table, Jacob drew in, with his breath, those thrilling details of

“ Most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field ;
Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,”

and appeared never weary with their recapitulation.

Thus winter succeeded winter, and the old tales were told o'er and o'er again.

As was anticipated, Bridget, upon the corporal's departure, made a determined effort to grasp the reins of government in the household of the general shop; but, sup-

ported by the old Peninsular, Jacob, with many misgivings concerning the result, put down the aspiring ambition of his housekeeper, and ruled with the combined lenity and firmness which become a master.

The apothecary and Mrs. Doctor Grimes, having arrived at a desirable understanding, continued to pass both their days and nights in that conjugal state of harmony, which is recommended as highly beneficial both for the condition of the mind and stomach.

There is no reason to conjecture that Margaret was ever rash enough to again attempt a lecture of the curtain kind, or, indeed, any other, and with undiminished popularity and confidence, the apothecary supported that professional reputation, of which he was so chary, untarnished and unimpaired,

to the last hour of his manipulating a pill or spreading a cataplasm.

It became the general subject of remark that Corporal Crump, from living, probably, so much at his ease, grew corpulent, and not a trace of the straight military figure of former days was visible in the puffy boniface of the Harrow and Pitchfork.

Attractive as that famous hostelrie indubitably was, under the immediate direction of Mistress Twigg, it became doubly so when the charming and buxom widow, from legal necessity, had the licence changed to Crump. Travellers have been known to make a wide circuit out of their direct road to quaff a cup of the best with its military landlord, and so fascinated were some of the most sensitive with his eloquence and sentiments, that it is a matter of unquestionable

authenticity they remained many more days than they intended hours.

The bar-parlour had to be enlarged in consequence of the great increase of business in that particular branch of the trade, and such was the rapidly increasing wealth of the corporal and his wife that the latter, in the joy of her heart, proposed that they should keep a chaise, and astonish the Browns!

To the credit of Corporal Crump be it said, there was nothing that Charlotte did, would, or could propose, but to which he felt a ready inclination to accede. To keep a chaise, however, would, as he knew, *greatly* astonish the Browns, and it required some reflection upon the policy of the measure.

With the keen eye of a general, Corporal Crump swept the horizon of the future, and

and pair, with powdered footmen, in gorgeous liveries and silk stockings, would take its place.

They indulged—did these respective and respectable families—in speculations upon the probable and particular source whence the “turn out” was procured;—whether from the profits arising from beer, brandy, gin, hollands, or rum.

They—the Robinsons and the Thompsons, the Smiths, Browns, and Johnsons—sincerely prayed that no accident would befall so spirited an investment; as for it to be smashed, hashed, or scratched, must prove quite a national calamity—quite.

Harnessed, however, in the consciousness of their own rectitude of conduct and design, the Corporal and his Charlotte were proof against these pigmy shafts, and each glanced from the butt, or fell short of the mark.

Happy, because contented, and taking pleasure in pleasing each other, Corporal Crump and his wife trotted together down the hill of life, with a glorious sunset overhead, and as they approached the bottom, they might have turned and examined every step without the regret of its being too late to retrace.

Jonathan and the Guard continued to make the most punctual visits to the Harrow and Pitchfork, and an allusion was occasionally made by the latter to the man that drank to the King with no heel-taps.

It was observed by several of Jonathan's friends, that his hilarity and liveliness were not in the ascendant for some weeks after the corporal's wedding, but gradually the depression wore away, and his "Hold hard! let go their heads, Ned," was as

cheerful as in the days that he himself entertained the hope of making the buxom widow his own, with her ready money, fixtures, good-will, and stock in trade.

James Burly, otherwise Burly James, remained in a position which seemed to afford all the gratification in life he either claimed or desired. As coachman to the "poor cripple," as he now called his master, he found, as he said, the service to be comparative freedom, and with liberal wages for doing next to nothing, the knight of the muscles felt not the slightest inclination to run the risk of bettering himself or his heirs.

Few indeed were the evenings that he absented himself from the bar-parlour, and there he might be seen, after the slight business of the day was done, in the full

enjoyment of that social intercourse with the kindred spirits therein assembled.

Quitting his country for his country's good, Doctor Starkie wandered to the sunny clime of Italy, where, possibly, full of remorse for unbridled passions, craft, and cruel treachery, he had his head smoothly shaved, and became a holy friar of orders grey.

The religious brother was soon known, far and wide, as the strictest disciplinarian that the Church possessed, and the penance he enjoined, and, it was said, performed as an ensample, caused him to be looked upon in the light of little short of a saint. Many were the pilgrims, and fair penitents, who came to his lonely cell for shrift and absolution; he was regarded by crowds of devotees, as the stepping-stone to Paradise.

A strange story, however, at length got mooted abroad, much to the scandal of this anointed son of the Church, and, whether true or not, dire was the vengeance which it brought upon his head.

None witnessed the struggle, save those engaged in it; but that it was one both fierce and long, the blood-sprinkled walls, and pavement slimed with gore, presented conclusive proofs.

With his limbs rigid and stiffened in the last violent throes of death, and his eyeballs staring as if ready to start from their sockets, the body of the monk was found on the floor of his cell, with a stiletto driven to the handle in his heart. In the grasp of one of his own convulsively clutched hands a small dagger was discovered, and the broken point, tipped with blood, showed that it had not been wide of the intended mark.

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The cause of the sanguinary deed was never spoken of, but when hints were given respecting it, men shrugged their shoulders, and remained in silence from each other.

CHAPTER XXI.

ONE sunny morning when the sky was clear, serene, and beautiful, Miss Christina Baxter might have been perceived in the highest of spirits—in spirits of the most buoyant description.

The myrtle was in full bloom, and so was Miss Baxter, although time, that sneaping destroyer of all that is lovely to look upon, had left the old shrub—need it be said that this description is applicable to the myrtle, and *not* to Miss Baxter?— with a declining

paucity of green leaves to show that it was still endowed with the powers of vitality.

As if to spare no one and nothing, however;—as if the fell destroyer revelled in shaking the full-bloom flower;—in crumbling “the noblest works that man can raise; — in wrinkling the face of beauty, and changing the hopeful beaming smile of youth into the sour scowl of impotent, babbling age, Time had stamped his crow’s foot even upon the visage of Miss Christina Baxter.

The hoar frost of Age, assisted by his help-mate Care, seemed to have taken pleasure in whitening the few remaining locks which were visible beneath the border of that little puritanical cap; but he could not—even with all that his help-mate had done—dim the lustre of a heart which shone in her face like a gem of priceless worth—

a heart beating with ten times more love for her neighbour than herself.

Miss Baxter looked older, it is true; there was no denying that self-supporting truism; but brisker she never was, happier she never appeared, as standing before a looking-glass of narrow dimensions, upon this sunny morning when the sky was clear, serene, and beautiful, she examined her figure both before and behind, and even raised herself on a footstool to take in the extreme depth, as it stood arrayed in the unusual splendour of a silver grey silk dress.

The pains which Miss Christina bestowed upon her toilet can be compared only to miniature painting. Not a frill nor a tucker but what was arranged and re-arranged in a way most becoming to the particular and general effect, and as she pronounced the study to be complete in the words that "she

thought that would do," Miss Baxter presented an appearance of extraordinary lustre.

"Only to think," soliloquized she, "that I should survive to be a bridesmaid!" and then Miss Christina's eyes became rivetted on the reflection of herself in the glass, as if to make assurance doubly sure, that there was no mistake in the matter.

"I'm not indulging in a vision," said Miss Baxter, proceeding to adjust the neatest of white drawn silk bonnets. "No; this is not a dream—a deception of the senses—not one of those fairy castles raised in the air, upon an imaginary foundation of rose-leaves. Oh, no! this is real happiness; happiness that I would rather die than wake from."

Miss Christina at this moment seemed overcome with her reflections, and sitting

down in a chair, conveniently placed, appeared rather disposed to have "a good cry."

Compromising the tendency with two large drops which rolled down her cheeks, the little simple-minded old governess pronounced that she was remarkably stupid to take on so, and wondered how she should be so weak as to weep at the happiest moment of her life. It really looked as if some persons—of whom she undoubtedly was one—resolved to turn the tap of their tears upon every opportunity, whether the cause justified the waste or not, and henceforth it should be a rule with her, to which there should be no exception, to abstain from making such a puerile display for the future.

Miss Christina expunged all traces of her tears, and tying the ribbons of the

THE FIRST OF THESE
IS THE CASE OF THE
MAN WHO WAS FOUND
DROWNING IN THE
SEA. THE SECOND IS
THE CASE OF THE
MAN WHO WAS FOUND
DROWNING IN THE
SEA. THE THIRD IS
THE CASE OF THE
MAN WHO WAS FOUND
DROWNING IN THE
SEA. THE FOURTH IS
THE CASE OF THE
MAN WHO WAS FOUND
DROWNING IN THE
SEA.

THE FIFTH IS THE
CASE OF THE MAN
WHO WAS FOUND
DROWNING IN THE
SEA. THE SIXTH IS
THE CASE OF THE
MAN WHO WAS FOUND
DROWNING IN THE
SEA. THE SEVENTH IS
THE CASE OF THE
MAN WHO WAS FOUND
DROWNING IN THE
SEA.

THE EIGHTH IS THE
CASE OF THE MAN
WHO WAS FOUND
DROWNING IN THE
SEA.

“The same to you ’m,” responded the Knight of the Muscles, “and many of them.”

“May I ask how you left our dear young friends?” returned Miss Christina with an inexpressible shake of the head as she drew on a tightly-fitting glove.

Burly James descended from the box-seat with great deliberation and, throwing the reins carelessly over the obese animals back—for he knew he could trust them to remain as still as the stones on which they stood—approached Miss Baxter, and taking off his hat—for he was always respectful to his superiors—whispered close to her ear; not that there existed any necessity for so doing:

“Himpatient ’m I should say, and if I’m any judge ’m, it’s a toss up of a button which ’o the two—supposing it were a race—would get to the church first, Miss Clara or Mr. Leonard;

but I think " continued he, "if a quarter's wages depended on it I'd back —"

"Hush, hush, good Mr. Burly!" interrupted Miss Baxter, deprecatingly. "Fie, fie! I shall really blush if you say any more."

"Then as it is not my natur 'm to make a lady blush," replied he, re-covering his head, "we'd better make a start of it," and throwing open the carriage door, Miss Christina entered the vehicle without any pomp or circumstance of state, and was driven away.

The past.

In that one word what joys and hopes, what sadness, smiles, and tears lie buried !

What is the present but the future's past? As we are, so have others been. Life is but the mutation of those scenes wherein the

actors play motley parts, and when played out, others succeed them. Few but think their own the heaviest to bear withal, and all assign the causes of their disappointments, and failures, to any source but those errors of which they themselves were the originators.

To justify himself how prompt is man;—
how loth to confess and acknowledge his
transgressions !

As it has been, so it is, and alas ! will be.

Life is the same dull, unprofitable story,
because none will heed the holy lessons it
would teach. It is, indeed,

“ a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying—nothing.”

FINIS.

